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LATE PRESIDENT OF THE UNIVERSITY.

THE GIFT OF HIS CHILDREN.

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SERMONS.

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THE TWO GREAT COMMANDMENTS.

SERMONS

BY THE

REV. ORVILLE DEWEY.

NEW YORK:
JAMES MILLER, PUBLISHER.
1876.

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4 January, 1892.

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PREFACE.

The title for this volume of sermons is taken from Matt. xxii. 36–39, "Master, which is the great commandment of the Law? Jesus said unto him, Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind. This is the first and great commandment. And the second is like unto it, Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself." The first six of the sermons relate more or less distinctly, to the first commandment; the seven following to the second; and the four additional sermons are of a miscellaneous character.

Sheffield.

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CONTENTS.

		PAGE
I.	On the Cultivation of the Religious Affections	9
II.	Righteousness the Self-revealed and Central Law	25
III.	On the Reasonableness and Greatness of Devotion	39
IV.	The Alternative	54
V.	Truth in all Religions	68
VI.	The Symbol and the Reality	84
VII.	The Love of God and of Man	99
VIII.	On Truthfulness	112
IX.	On Impatience	128
X.	On Self-Renunciation	141
XI.	On Perfection	155
XII.	Humanity, and the Gospel Demand upon it	168
XIII.	Humanity compared with Human Distinctions	182
XIV.	This Life, the Prophecy of a Future	195
XV.	Christ Intelligible and Imitable	208
XVI.	The Same Subject	223
XVII.	The Old and the New	237
	Basis and Superstructure	256
	Theism and Atheism	281
	On the Validity of our Knowledge of God	291

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SERMONS.

I.

ON THE CULTIVATION OF THE RELIGIOUS AFFECTIONS.

Ps. cxlv. 10.—"All thy works praise thee, O Lord, and thy saints bless thee."

THERE is a cluster of stars in the Southern heavens, appearing to the naked eye, as a faint haze, scarcely larger than a hand's-breadth; but which is seen by the telescope, to be filled with innumerable suns. Suns, they must be, because they could not be seen if they were planetary orbs: and again, suns, because it is found by the spectrum analysis, that they are composed of the same materials as our own. If a canvas were lifted up, high and vast as a mountain-side, and then if it were filled with jets of golden light, thickest in the centre, and sown all round with brilliant points, some impression might be taken of that wondrous spectacle in the heavens.

There is a bed of coral, and many such there are, in the Pacific seas, filled with animalcules—living creatures, unnumbered as the stars in that far-off universe; so small that only the microscope can discover them; each one with an exquisite organization; each one fitted for its work, and all working with perfect enjoyment. The whole population of our globe is but as a unit to the countless millions which inhabit those coral beds. How much enjoyment there is in a hundred mil-

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lions of them — and there are more than that in a drop of water — how much enjoyment, I say, in that drop of water, compared with what there is in a single animal, an ox or a lion, we do not know; but they are active; they feed and sport — I have seen them; they are sensitive creatures, they play and they work: they build houses, larger than royal palaces — houses in which they live; and when they die, they leave behind them tombs, the cemetery ranges of coral reef, which line the shores of continents.

Between these extremes of the creation, between the almost infinitely great and the infinitesimally small, there is a universe of splendor, beauty and beneficence; systems within systems of material order, from the hyssop that springeth by the wall, to the cedar of Lebanon, from the taper that shines in our chamber, to Sirius flaming with the blaze of a hundred suns; worlds within worlds of life; hundreds of thousands of animal species on earth and millions perhaps, of such living worlds in the spheres around us; and hierarchies of immortal souls, made to behold and enjoy all this wonder and beauty:

> "There's not the smallest orb which thou beholdest,
> But in his motion like an angel sings,
> Still quiring to the young-eyed cherubins."

Above all these worlds of life, these systems of worlds, there is One Being, from whom they have proceeded — from One Being, or from nothing: who can believe that it is from nothing? No, as we look upon this stupendous frame of things, one thought predominates over all others; and we say of this universe — "whose Builder and Maker is God." I know of Him, the least possible compared with what He is; and yet re is nothing of which I know so much. All else

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that I know is knowing something of Him. No perception of my mind, no thought, no imagination, no affection, but relates to something which His power has made, or His goodness given.

What place does this great Idea hold in our minds? Not, what place as an abstraction, but as a reality; what place in our daily thoughts, in our cherished affections, in the very culture of our minds and hearts, in the very forming our character, in the living springs of our happiness, in what we most earnestly seek to know and realize and make our own? Does it hold any such place—i.e. in most minds? When the grandeur and beauty of nature are before us, when we gaze upon beautiful scenery, does the thought of that great Presence often come over us, and irradiate them with new glory? When we mingle with our fellow-beings in happy intercourse, do we often think of that Goodness that breathes through all human affections? And when the visible world is shut out; when we lay ourselves down to rest, alone, in silence, and darkness, does the all-creating Life, that stirs in every beating pulse and thrilling nerve, in this whole complicated and wondrous frame, and in the mind that soars above it, often fill us with adoring gratitude and peaceful trust?

If not, why does it not? Why *is* it, that that which is not only greatest as an object of thought, but which has the most vital relations with all that we think, occupies so small a space in the actual thoughts of men? We admire grandeur and beauty; it is a law of our nature. We are not made to prefer the mean and low for contemplation, to that which is lofty and sublime. We could not bend our gaze upon the ground, or upon any gem that sparkled in it, if an angel presence were passing by. How then, is this?

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How is it, that this anomaly in human experience is to be understood? How is it, that the pulpit can hurl down denunciations upon the people for their neglect of God, and the people, convicted and conscience-stricken, can do nothing but bow submissive before it? A man would resent the charge of indifference to human friendship and affection. Accuse him of being thankless to his benefactor, and he feels it like a wound. Tell him even, that he has no taste, no sense of what is beautiful or grand in nature or art, no admiration nor reverence for the noblest things, for the noblest men in the world, and he will be as indignant as if he were defamed. How is it, then, that he can pass on in life and through life, unconcerned at being cold and dead to that, which is the source of all that is glorious and beautiful — seldom brought to any solemn pause or meditation, seldom drawn to admiration or wonder, by all the Glory and Goodness and Loveliness that shine around him?

Doubtless there are reasons; partly moral, but partly mental also. Scripture saith, "Your iniquities have separated between you and your God." Doubtless the thought of an Infinite Holiness strikes us with restraining awe. Infinite Perfection, through our misconception of it, causes our imperfection to stand aghast, aloof, at a distance. It could never have been meant that it should do so. Infinite Perfection is Infinite Love, and should win and draw all creatures to it. And there is nothing which, to my mind, more completely sums up the meaning of the mission of Jesus, than that he came "to bring us nigh to God."

But there are mental difficulties also, in the way. Sympathy is the nurse of affection; but we hesitate to apply that term to the relation between us and the Infinite One. I will not say that His *invisibility* hin-

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ders us from feeling His presence; for man's spirit is just as truly invisible. But human loveliness is clothed with a form, is manifested by a countenance, by actions and expressions, which appeal more easily and movingly to our affections. Nor yet is this all. Greater hindrances than all these, are found in false ideas of God. These take root, alas! in the very nurture of our childhood. All that makes *religion* disagreeable to us, all the gloom and constraint that gathered in the faces of our friends when God was spoken of, all the weariness of enforced worship — sabbaths and sermons and catechisings — all these influences have collected around the great central Idea, to make it something strange and repulsive. And when we grew up into life, what were we taught concerning God? What was the character ascribed to Him? Doubtless it was said, that He is infinitely good; and *that*, detached from all other considerations, would draw love to Him, and has. But theology has overshadowed the bright picture, and created a character, which, if it were attributed to any other being, it would be impossible to love. Men have been taught that it was natural to them to hate their Maker; and such a Being as has been represented to be their Maker, a Being, who has brought them into existence, with a nature totally depraved and utterly helpless, unable to render obedience, and yet for failing of it, to be doomed to endless misery: yes, infants, little children too, who had not sinned, doomed to be cast into everlasting fire, there to suffer forever, not for any thing they had done, but for Adam's fall; such a Being, I say, men could not love; but such a Being their Maker is *not*. The dogma of endless pain for the errings of a short life, is fast dying out of the world; but its influence upon our minds, does not die so fast. Let not those who flatter them-

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selves that they have escaped from the shadow of darkening creeds, imagine that they have escaped altogether. The motley of errors which ages have laid, fold after fold, upon the human mind, cannot be stripped off, in a single generation.

Now all this enforces the necessity of care and culture for our religious affections. And yet this is precisely what is liable to be overlooked. It is so with all our affections. The idea of cultivating them, enters into few men's thoughts. Family attachment, for instance, friendship, love, are regarded as things to be left to themselves. Because they are natural and spontaneous, which they *are* in their origin, it is thought that they are to be left to themselves. Culture, care of them, would distort or stunt them, it is thought, would mar their beauty or check their freedom. Like wild growths of nature they are left to be; to run to waste or to overgrowth, not to be trained to higher perfection and beauty, as in a garden.

Thus wedlock, the tap-root of all well-ordered human society, is looked upon as a simple, perhaps sudden love-growth — "love at first sight," it is sometimes called; and it is expected to make a happy life of itself. Its first rapture is taken to be the pledge of life-long happiness. Alas! there are those, and too many such, who find that to be a dreadful mistake. I once heard a lecturer, who boldly said, "No: wedlock is not meant for happiness alone, but for development, discipline, trial of the character." Certain it is, and plain, that two imperfect, human wills cannot be bound together in any possible relation, without difference and difficulty sometimes springing up. Questions must often arise. "Is *this*, or *that* way, the best? Which, of two things is right — which, expedient?" It is impossible that any two minds should always

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agree. And that is a reason, I think, for the separate employments that seem to be appointed to the sexes,—for separate spheres of action, that there be not too much collision. But, any way, it is certain that there is enough, and inevitably enough, to make candor, patience and forbearance necessary; in other words to make cultivation, thought, watchfulness indispensable to the perfection and blessedness of connubial love.

I have turned aside from my theme for a moment, to give this as an illustration; for that which is true in the sphere of our highest earthly affections, is still more true in the higher sphere of our religious affections. Religion in the soul, is regarded as a gift bestowed, rather than as a talent to be improved. But neglected, bound up and laid aside in a napkin, it will find no acceptance nor favor nor help from Heaven.

The higher *any* culture is in the soul, the more will it cost to reach it; the highest education, in science, literature, philosophy, art, more study and effort than the lowest. If then, there is, between every soul and its Maker, a bond more sacred, a relation more exalted, than any other; if this one thing in human experience, is loftier, is more sublime than any other; if there is such a thing possible for man as the love of God, a reverence, an adoration which no words can utter, a trust and joy in the Infinite Rectitude, bringing perfect peace, bringing the unshaken assurance that all is well, and will end well; if such a stay and strength can be found by the weak and troubled soul, and such a profound and soul-filling satisfaction, would the study and care and prayer of a life, be accounted too much, to gain it?

But now every thing depends on the *mode* of seeking, in other words, upon the method of culture; and upon the motive too. If piety is cultivated with reluctance,

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with much pain, and much mere pains-taking, only to escape perdition, only to secure the favor of a jealous God, nothing will be gained but dearth and barrenness and death; or if life of a certain kind, if a selfish satisfaction, it will not be piety but superstition.

Therefore the first thing in the culture of piety, is to think rightly of God; not only by ridding our minds of the false ideas to which I have referred, but by positive conceptions of the Divine Nature, as that which justly draws to it an unhesitating and unbounded affection.

Now that which hinders this, is either a distrust of the Infinite Goodness, or else it is the failure to see this Goodness as real, as intentional, as the attribute of a Being. Consider first, the failure to see. I cannot love or revere an abstraction. I cannot love a universe of *things*, though it be co-ordinated to do me good. There must be a meaning, a motive, an intent in all this, or I am left cold, indifferent, and thankless. And this is the condition of too many minds. The earth and sky give us light and food and raiment; and the common thought does not go beyond them. "What a beautiful day!" one says, and thinks no more of it — perhaps never does. The stream of social affections flows through us and around us; and what pours that flood-tide of joy through the world is unthought of: swift-winged thoughts fly from mind to mind in wonderful interchanges, all the day long; and they are as birds of the air, scarcely regarded; never singing out our thanksgiving to the all-quickening Life. We are shut up in this visible round of nature and life, as in a theatre; the lights, the scenes engage us: and who wrought this wonderful drama, who has filled it with beauty, with delight, with joyous satisfaction — this Source of all is out of the common reach of men's thoughts.

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"Filled it with delight, with joy," do you say? Ah! if it were so. Here comes in the distrust. Pain, bitter pain, of body and mind; "the heart-ache and the thousand ills that flesh is heir to;" can it be Goodness, unmingled Goodness, that sends all this upon us? This is not often expressed, but it is felt, as a brooding distrust. I remember being told of a man, otherwise respectable, who was drawing nigh to his end, in great, and previously long-continued suffering, who broke out into open-mouthed rage at his lot; who did what the wife of Job counselled *him* to do; who cursed God and died. He said, "speak not to me of God, as a Being to love. God Almighty, if there be a God, would never inflict upon me such suffering, if he were a good Being." Now suppose that this man had lived to learn a new lesson from the discipline of sorrow and pain. Suppose that he had lived to learn that suffering contributes to make a far grander manhood than uninterrupted enjoyment could. Suppose he had risen from his sick-bed, with a new and more tender sympathy for *all* suffering; nay, that he had been led to consecrate his life to the soothing and relief of all suffering; and that he had thus come to a far other and nobler end, amidst the blessings and thanksgivings of multitudes whom he had lived to comfort and help. Would he not then have seen that "whom God *loveth*, he chasteneth"? Why even Bidpai, the old Asiatic fabulist, knew that. Boethius and many another ancient sage and sufferer knew that. They all say, what our Christian teachers say, that the path to the highest for man, is through hardship and trial and heroic endurance; nay that martyrdom — to die for the right, amidst fire and blood, is the very crown of humanity.

It is said, I know, that animals have no such remu-

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neration for what they suffer. And it may be asked why they should suffer at all; since it is not for their sins, nor for their improvement. The problem may be too deep for us to fathom. But we see in all animal life an immense superabundance of enjoyment, with but few of the drawbacks, that are found in our human lot. And seeing this, more than one miserable human creature has envied them their happy condition. And such is their enjoyment of existence, and such are the evidences of a divine goodness and wisdom all around us, that I should not so much wonder at the animal lot, as I should, at the presumption, that turned it into an argument for distrust of God. Surely it is reasonable to believe, and it is monstrous to doubt, that the best was ordained for them, as for all things, the best that was possible. We do not know that it was possible to give any creature a constitution, sensitive to pleasure without its being liable to pain; the one being the correlative of the other. Unconditioned good may be as impossible to created beings as absolute perfection. Impossibilities are beyond the reach of any power to achieve, or wisdom to will. Nobody denies that the streams which flow down our valleys, are beneficent and beautiful, though they sometimes swell into freshets that tear away their banks or the buildings upon them.

And there *is* a stream of blessings, flowing through the world, through the universe, in outpoured life, in the light of suns and stars,

> "Bright effluence of bright essence increate;"

in the astonishing system of molecules, now discovered, now found to be atoms or forces propagated with inconceivable swiftness through the whole material creation, causing it to throb from side to side, as with pulses of the infinite Life. All this must draw our

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wonder, delight and admiration to the all-wonderful Cause, whatever else we know, or do not know concerning it.

How can any rational being look upon all this outward show, and never think of the infinite Reality! How can he idly glance at the pages of such a Volume, and never ask what it tells him! Imagine social life to be such — a mere outside show, and no thought nor affection of ours, going beyond the visible action, to the loving hearts around us! It would be an inconceivable blindness. But an infinite goodness! — think of that; and no thought going behind the gifts to the Giver? If it had created beauty, and the sense of the beautiful alone, *that* would be enough to challenge perpetual admiration. Why should not a thoughtful man pause and meditate upon all this, and deliberately and earnestly set himself to acquire, to cultivate the habit of looking through the seen to the Unseen? I put it to such thoughtful man; and I say, one of two things is certain and must be accepted by you. Either there is no God: the universe of *things* is all that exists; or there is a God — the Cause of all this wonderful universe that is around us. If atheism is the mournful conclusion to which any one has come, then in that mournfulness I must leave him, so far as my present argument is concerned; appeal, expostulation, calling upon all religious aspirations, has nothing to do with him. But if there is a God, what then? If it is a fool that says, "there is no God;" what is he, who says, there *is* a God, there *is* such a transcendent and all-glorious Existence, and does not bow down with awe and wonder, with joy and gladness in His presence — does not feel that *that* is the one, central Idea about which every thing revolves? *Every* thing — the stars in their courses, the train of all earthly events, the

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thoughts, the purposes, the reverence, the obedience of every living soul.

To arrest the thoughts, to fix them from time to time in meditation upon God, to lift the undisturbed soul to Him in aspiration and prayer, to read books written by devout men; to see how David, how Isaiah, how Jesus felt the great presence; to meditate upon the words of the Psalmist, "O God, Thou art my God, early will I seek Thee;" to listen when Jesus says, "Father, my Father!" — is not this, what any one can do, what he will do, if he is interested to learn this great wisdom, what he *would* do, to be acquainted with any thing that he desires to know; as the artist with his model, the poet with his theme, the philosopher with his problem? Shall every thing be studied, inquired into, meditated upon, but the Source of all thought, knowledge and wisdom? Shall a man seek to know of every thing, but of God? The partisan theology of sects is laden, in these days I know, with the heaviest opprobrium; but theology, in the true sense of the word, is the noblest of sciences and pursuits.

But let not this daily meditation, this holy retreat, that I am speaking of, be spoiled by formality or by constraint; let it, in the time and manner of it, be freely chosen, and freely used as every one finds best for him. There are many who go daily to their prayers, to what they call perhaps, "*saying* their prayers," reluctantly; to keep their religious account right; to do that, without which they would not be Christians, and could have no Christian hope; like the pilgrim to Mecca or Loretto, to touch a certain spot, or to perform a certain rite, necessary to salvation. Fatal is all such praying; leaving the soul cold, reluctant, sad in its devotions, or if with a selfish joy, no better for it. No; let the retreat into private thought

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be welcome, free, sought for a higher end than safety. No matter for the manner of it: walking in a grove, sitting in silence, or kneeling in lowly adoration. Let it be a mingling of meditations and prayers; of thoughts of ourselves, of our errings and needs — a seeking for help and strength, but above all a sinking into the depths unknown, of the all-divine, and good and beautiful. God is far away from the too common habits of our minds; let us draw nigh to Him, to "be filled as St. Paul expresses it — to be filled, with all His fulness."

Blessed beyond all price, is the place and the hour of such visitation from on high; yea, one touch of that great feeling; but the whole of life, the world is the sphere to be blessed by an habitual sense of the ever-present and all-surrounding Goodness: and to attain this, is the special and earnest endeavor which I would urge.

There is a sense of the Divine Presence, in which one may be said, like Enoch of old, to walk with God. It is not distinctly prayer: it is better than prayer; it is the outcome of prayer; but who will ever attain to this without learning by direct endeavor to look through life, through the world, through nature, up to nature's God?

Ah! this all-surrounding Goodness — it is too vast and glorious for us to comprehend; and alas! for us, it seems so impersonal, at times. It *must* be real and living; goodness cannot be an attribute of matter; whatever has made me good and happy must have meant it; sunshine and showers and spring verdure, have no thought in them to do that; the joy and love that flow through our hearts, cannot have come from nothing: and yet, the all-pervading Goodness seems so impersonal at times. It is liable to seem so, from

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its boundless and ceasless diffusion. And it moves on in such majestic and unbending order; it shines in the sun, it falls in the rain; all is silent, voiceless, unvarying *law* — "the light, the fountains sweet," morning and evening; the splendor of day and the night-shade for repose, hill and dale, flowing streams and waving grain-fields — so that he who looks upon all this, with vague and unthinking gaze, will never come to know the living God.

Then, and if it be so, must come in place of this vague, unthinking gaze, a thoughtful, careful, cultivated attention. A book is opened to us, in nature and in our own souls, for us to read. Shall we not strive to penetrate through its visible letters, to its great meaning? Why, even the work of an earthly sage, demands that much of us. What would be said of one, who looked upon the works of a great human genius, of Shakspeare or Milton, and took notice of nothing but the exterior appearance — the fine binding, the beautiful type, the gilded edges; and never cared to go beyond, to the volumed wisdom within? And if such a superficial person should come under our observation, could we help saying to him — why do you not look more deeply into these volumes, to see what genius, light and beauty are within them?

O man of thought! if such will listen to me — why was thought given you, if not to rise to the Source of all thought? I am sorry, in what I am saying, to use this tone of urgency, of urgent argument — so spontaneous, so freely up-springing is the devotion of a soul once touched, once translated into that sphere of heavenly light and life. But it *must be urged*, it must be urged, upon a world that is living without God. It is a new word to that world. And accepted, it would make a new heavens and a new earth. But if

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habit is strong, and argument with it, alas! unavailing, though I trust it is not, yet if I thought it must be so, I would turn to the season in which habits are not formed, to the plastic season of youth: and I would say — begin that life which you have just received from the Infinite Goodness, by confiding in it, by loving it. What is it, that has kindled the heavens over you, and opened your eyes to all this wonder and beauty around you? Just stepped out from nothing, just awakened to this joyous existence; flowers blossoming in your path, pleasant fields and play-grounds around you; sweet fields, not *beyond* the swelling flood, but here and now around you; sweeter affections in your hearts, that make the names of father, mother, brother, sister so dear; what is it, that has opened these fountains of joy and gladness; what is it that hath poured around you, all this flood of blessings? It is Goodness, overflowing, unbounded, unspeakable. It is God. If God were not, nothing of all this had ever been. Turn, child of God! — turn, like the morning-glory, to that Sun, which alone can impart to your life, its brightest hues, and fill it with more than earthly fragrance.

In old time, "men sought the Lord, if haply they might feel after Him and find Him." So must they seek Him still; with earnest desire and endeavor. Truly and rightly to love the Infinite Goodness, is to do so, not of constraint, not for hire, not for heaven, but for itself — simply, sincerely, willingly, gladly; just as we love every thing good and lovely. We grow in the love of our friend, by being with him, in body or in spirit. So must we be with God, in meditation, in communion, in the full sense of His presence. David knew the way. "O God, Thou art my God, early will I seek Thee: my soul thirsteth for Thee, my

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flesh longeth for Thee; to see Thy power and Thy glory. Because Thy loving-kindness is better than life, my lips shall praise thee. Thus will I bless Thee while I live; I will lift up my hands in Thy name."

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II.

RIGHTEOUSNESS, THE SELF-REVEALED AND CENTRAL LAW.

"THE ETERNAL POWER, NOT OURSELVES, THAT MAKES FOR RIGHTEOUSNESS."

JOB xxxvi. 3.—"I will fetch my knowledge from afar, and will ascribe righteousness to my Maker."

THE expression, "I will fetch my knowledge from afar," is to be explained by the circumstances. The controversy between Job and his friends, had hitherto turned principally, upon Job's particular case. But now comes forward at last, Elihu, the youngest of them, and more of a Radical than his elders, and he says, "I will fetch my knowledge from afar." That is, I will go behind and beyond these old questions about Providence, and these personal questions about Job; I will go down to the root of all truth. Whatever else be true or false, "I will ascribe righteousness to my Maker."

That which Elihu says, or what I understand him to mean, suggests to me the subject of my discourse this morning. And there is some analogy between that old debate, and the circumstances in which I speak to you. For there are questions debated *now*, about that very system of things which was brought into controversy in the book of Job — questions indeed, concerning nature and life, concerning God and man, more abstruse and scientific than those old ones; and what I

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propose to maintain, going behind all these questions, is, that righteousness, whatever else be disputed about, is inwrought and intrenched in the very nature of things, in the universe of things—in all things I say, from the highest to the lowest, from man to the whole material creation below him. In man, I say, and in nature.

First, in man, in human nature, there is a sense of right and wrong. Original and a part of the human constitution, or else inevitably developed, there is a sense of right and wrong. Language cannot state a stronger opposition of thought, than these words express. We may not be able to explain it, but we feel it. The right is right, we say, and the wrong is wrong. But look into men's faces when they utter these words; and *they* will expound to you the great fact of which I speak. What fact? Why the fact of conscience. I have heard it argued as against this fact, that men *differ* about what *is* right, and what, wrong. But this makes no difference in their *feeling* towards right and wrong. Differ as they may, though they do *not* differ essentially, yet what a man *thinks* to be right, he approves of, and what he *thinks* to be wrong, he condemns. It is this *feeling* that I insist upon; and it is incontrovertibly human. All men have it. It varies in development, with culture; but it is always the same feeling. It is clearer at maturity, than in childhood; clearer among cultivated nations, than among rude and ignorant tribes; but it is everywhere, a fact, embedded in human nature. All conversation and conduct, all that men say or write or do, all literature, all institutions, all laws, all governments, testify to this difference which men make between right and wrong.

And this furthermore is to be said, and this espe-

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cially, that the feeling I am speaking of, exists in men in spite of them. How glad would it make the liar, the knave, the base sensualist, to be able to say that his course is right; that what the world calls his baseness, is something noble and beautiful! But he cannot say it. This shows a Will speaking *through* him, other than his own will. It shows that righteousness is a law laid down for him, in the very foundations of his nature.

There are two contending theories of morals; but they both in this respect, conduct to the same conclusion. The Transcendentalist says that the sense of right is intuitive; that it belongs to the very constitution of our being: and of the truth of this theory I have no doubt. The Utilitarian says, a thing is right because it is useful. But if such is the constitution of things that the usefulness of certain actions, sets them up as right and binding, then we see the same law of righteousness established as a law of our being; established not by ourselves, but by the Power that has placed us in this world.

Turn now from man, to the sphere beneath him, to the material world.

Put two men upon the earth, to test the character of nature, the one indolent, reckless, given over to sensual self-indulgence; the other, industrious, heedful, temperate, conscious of duties to be performed. Can there be any doubt, to which nature is favorable and friendly? The one she fights against, in every way. She will not allow him competence nor comfort, nor peace. She says to him, "beg, wander, starve; do what you will: I will not help you. Man may take you in, shivering at his door; but my cold and storm will not spare you." To the other — but I need not report, what she says to the other. Everywhere

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indeed, nature is a teacher of truth and wisdom. Everywhere she opens a book more wonderful in its contents than all the other books in the world. He who reads therein, and understands it, and gathers its beauty into his soul, will be a wise and good man. Such is the system of things.

We can conceive of a world constructed differently, constructed for indulgence alone; for luxurious ease, for voluptuous enjoyment, for revelling and excess; with palaces built and stored, with soft cushions spread all around, and fountains of maddening stimulants bursting from every hill-side. But it is not so. Nay, nothing but resolute and righteous virtue can adjust itself to the material conditions of human existence. Nay more; not only does nature say "be right, to be on good terms with me," but she keeps sharp reckoning with her human inhabitant. Conscience itself is not so strict with him as she is. She will not pardon idleness, nor negligence. She rebukes, she repels improvidence, slighting, haste and passion. Industry, care and fidelity, ay, regular and regulated industry, nature *will have;* and *has* it too, in spite of all human reluctance and wilfulness. Humanity is bound up in this moral bond; without which all would go to wreck, without which it could not exist at all.

I wonder if the cultivators of the soil often think of this. For here is a system of things around them, framed in rectitude; which favors the right, and punishes the wrong. And this is true upon the largest scale, as upon the smallest; not upon farms only, but upon continents. Let men cut off all the forests, and there shall be drought and dried-up streams. Let the marshes be left undrained, and there shall be miasma and fever. Let cities be filthy, and there shall the pestilence walk in darkness and destruction waste at

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noonday. Here is a world with elements and agencies which demand fidelity and obedience, as strictly as if they were enacted and written laws. Nobody doubts that the lawgiver demands rectitude; equally evident is it that nature does.

Thus then, it is manifest, first, that the sentiment of the right is wrought into the very structure of our being, and, next, that there is a teaching, nay and a bolstering of it, in the very frame of nature.

And consider what would have become of the world, if this had been otherwise. Imagine that the law of righteousness had *not* thus pressed upon the world. Imagine that wrong-doing had commanded the homage now given to right-doing; that injustice, fraud, intemperance, every thing base, had been held to be deserving of honor and praise. Not only would it have been a worthless world, but it could not long have existed at all. The one bad principle set up in place of the good and right, would have whelmed the human race in utter ruin. All order, all Government, all public law and all private virtue would have gone down before it. *All* reposes upon the sublime idea of the right. It was not left to any human conventions to establish it. It establishes *them*. Far deeper-founded than unstable human opinion, it is evidently the will of the Power that made us.

But it is not its use alone, it is not its political or social necessity alone, that vindicates it; useful or not, *it is*. And it is not common sense alone that receives it, but alike the profoundest philosophy. It is noteworthy that the greatest speculative thinker we have, the German Kant, after having pushed his searching analysis to the doubt of every thing else, settles at last upon this moral sense, as the only certainty to build upon. This was his "categorical imperative"

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— that which absolutely *commands* assent. That to do good to others is right, and to hate and hurt them is wrong, this is a certainty the contrary of which cannot be entertained in thesis, nor in thought. This is a truth for all ages; nay for all worlds. There *can* be no *world*, where this is not a truth. Infinitude cannot swell beyond it, nor eternity waste nor wear it out.

And now if any who hear me, shall think that the point which I have labored to establish, is too obvious, too self-evident to make it worth while to insist upon it, or too abstract to be of any practical importance, let me go on to say something of what it has to do with our lives, and with our thoughts, on the greatest subjects of human thought.

There is in the material universe, a law of gravitation. It holds the earth in its orbit, and it holds all things upon its surface to the centre; so that neither winds nor waves, nor volcanoes nor earthquakes, can break the great bond, nor the prevailing order. How unconscious are we apt to be, of our blessings! I never heard anybody give thanks for the law of gravitation; yet in this, stand the security and calmness in which we hold all our blessings. In like manner, there is a moral bond laid upon the world; and no upheavings of human violence, no struggles of wilful passion, no devices of the crafty, nor tumult of the people, can annul the everlasting law. If it were not for this, in what overwhelming anxieties would our lives be passed.

But this law goes yet deeper; it goes deep into the conduct of life; it is not only security, but admonition, serious and weighty.

Whoever steps upon this world, whoever in his youth looks out upon the path before him, has some idea of what he will do, and how he will do it; what rule he

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will walk by. What *shall* it be? *What* shall he do? Right and wrong are before him. Conscience commands the one. Passion, indulgence, vice, dishonesty draw him the other way. Which shall he follow? The right, or the wrong? Ah! what fatal decision, if he chooses the wrong, or shall let evil temptation choose it for him! He fights against heaven and earth, against the great laws of his being and of the universe around him. Every thing is against him. Out from the height and from the depth, from sky and earth, from the labor-field and the merchant's wharf, comes the everlasting cry — "woe, woe unto him that calls evil, good; that puts darkness for light!"

Is it not so? What man ever felt it to be good for him to be a bad man? For an hour or a day, he may have exulted in a bad deed; some flush of success, some delusion of maddening passion, may have blinded him. What temporary delusions there may be in the human heart, in that unfathomed mystery of good and evil struggling together, I will not answer for. But no man ever came to the completion of this experiment, to the *end* of a long life, on which manifest wickedness has set its stamp, and ever thought it to be a satisfactory or happy life. No mad and self-willed monarch like Charles XII. of Sweden, who

> "Left a name at which the world grew pale,
> To point a moral or adorn a tale;"

no Imperial voluptuary like Nero or Caligula, ever found his life to be a happy one. And even where secret selfishness is hidden under the veils of seeming success in ambitious schemes or in the pride of ill-got gain, and the man persuades himself that he is a good man, nay, and a good Christian, yet that secret selfishness like a canker within, eats out all worth and welfare.

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In evil times, like those upon which, in some respects, we are fallen, when gigantic dishonesty both in public and private life walks abroad, not unrebuked, thank God, but unblushing; when good men sigh almost in despair, and the weak sink in the struggle with the strong; when the old honesty and the old religion together are called in question, and success seems to be made the god of this world, it is good for us to remember, that there *is* a hand, *yet* ruling in the world, stronger than any man's hand. Let bad men succeed; let plotters prosper in their devices; let voluptuaries revel in guilty pleasure; let vile politicians sell the public weal for place and power; let all go down, or seem to go down; let truth be fallen in the streets, and its great confessors be led to the stake; and earth and hell rise to embroil the order of the world: yet calm and strong, yea, unconquerable, omnipotent, is the everlasting right. The feeblest man that is wronged, the weakest victim that is broken upon the rack, the poorest slave dashed bleeding to the earth, may lift his hand to heaven and take hold of the Almightiness of Infinite Rectitude. God is for him, though all the world be against him.

Yet more than a resource and a support, more than a rule of conduct, is this rectitude; it is supreme and all-pervading authority. Men are apt to think when they are doing something which their own mind condemns, that it is only their own little conscience that they are dealing with; and they turn it aside or cast it down, as if it were but a small obstacle in their way. They reason, or they trifle with it; they say perhaps that it "*is* but a notion;" *they* would have a larger liberty; they draw a defence for some excess or license, out of their own peculiar case; they are sick or miserable, or torn with exceptional or hereditary passions; and so they

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get rid, and are glad to get rid, of their little scruples. But this conscience within them, is the expositor of an Infinite Conscience, that pervades heaven and earth. The electric spark that touches the nerve of their moral sense, from time to time, is part of the lightning stream that flashes from one side of the world to the other. I remember that James Otis — one of our great names of the Revolution, that is never to be forgotten — desired in his declining days, to die by lightning. I have stood in the very doorway where he stood, gazing upon a departing thunder-storm, when a bolt flashed back, as if to answer his wish, and laid him dead upon the threshhold. It was an event awful to witness. But what would it have been, if he had stood there, to brave and defy the power that struck him down! That is what every man does, who consciously and obstinately violates his conscience; who does, and persists in doing, what he knows to be wrong. It is a more awful *thing*, than this easy and worldly conscience takes to heart, to consider. Is it not to withstand the righteous law that is written within him? Is not the voice he refuses to hear, the voice of God?

But is it the voice of God? *Is* there a God? — one may say. The grave controversies of the day venture even upon that awful question.

I go then, to a further application. I have said that the all-pervading righteousness of which I have been speaking, has to do, not only with our lives, but with our thoughts, on the greatest subjects of human thought. Let us consider it.

The universe, we say, is imbued, interpenetrated with the element of righteousness. It is as manifest as the power of gravitation. Not more certainly is there something that draws and holds us to the earth, than there is something that draws us to an approval

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of the right. What is it? We say that animal instinct is *put into* the animal nature for its guidance, by the power that made it. Is it not equally evident that the sense of right, is put into moral natures for their guidance, by the power that made them? And must not the power that has laid that law upon them, itself be righteous?

Consider that there *are* only two kinds of power that are conceivable — matter and spirit, thought and thing. Can righteousness, or can that which creates the sense of righteousness, be a thing? Can any form or force material, be such a cause? Can leaf or tree, can wind or wave, can flower or star, can light or motion, or any concourse or action of all these, have given birth to righteousness? — for we *have* materialists who say that every thing comes from a material organization. But does not this conception which we have of righteousness in our minds, and have it in spite of ourselves; does it not imply of necessity something divine, as its cause? I say of necessity. For this idea of righteousness, is as much an evolution in me, as any that the scientist finds in nature. It must have come from somewhere: where *has* it come from? Dr. Darwin says that every thing comes in the form of evolution, evolution of plants, of animals, up to man; it is a law of nature; it must be so. But so is conscience an evolution. Nay, so does he regard it. And this is the way in which he traces it, and proposes to account for it. Men see, he says, that certain actions promote the common welfare. Therefore they favor them. Their selfishness leads them to do so. But why does the feeling arise in them, which is not selfishness, which opposes their selfishness — the feeling that they *ought* to perform those actions. That, I think, is what he does not account for, nor does any

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Utilitarian theory. That sense of the right, that sense of righteousness lies behind all their theories; and nothing can account for it, but a Cause behind all, which has produced it. It is the voice of God in the soul.

Let us look at it in the soul itself, and ask again — what is it? And whence came it? Here in man, is this sense of right, this feeling that it is a duty to do it — this feeling, not merely that a thing is useful and best but that he *ought* to do what is useful and best. It is in man; it is a part of him; it is laid upon him and he cannot throw it off. Man would not be man without it. Without it, he could not *live* with his fellows, but as a beast lives. Let any man say that wrong is better than right, hate than love, falsehood than truth; and you would not marry with him, you would not trade with him, you would not have him sit upon a jury; he would be cut off and cast out from the race.

What is this sense of right, then, I still say, this sense of righteousness, that exists in the human soul? What has made it? What has made it to be in us? Is it the human will? It exists in spite of the human will. Let all men unite and combine to put it down. They cannot do it. They can no more destroy it than they can destroy any power or law of nature. If therefore, no material force can have given birth to it, and no human will can have done it; if it stands as an everlasting fact in the very constitution of things; then it must be something behind all: then it must be the all-originating Cause: then it must be an Infinite Righteousness. And an infinite righteousness — what is that? It is God! And of all contradictions in idea, I know of none greater than this — to suppose this grand moral law of the universe, this intense moral sentiment, this stupendous meaning to be everywhere,

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without any one to originate or mean it; to suppose this sublime order and authority to pervade all things, and none to create or ordain it.

But now I ask a further question. Can there be righteousness, without beneficence? An eminent writer speaks with reiterating confidence, "of that in the universe, which makes for righteousness." It is his shibboleth. "A Power," he says, "which makes for righteousness;" he is sure of that. But why does he not say also — a Power that makes for beneficence? Not to dwell upon the million-fold evidence of its beneficence, can there, I ask, be righteousness without it? Can we conceive of a Being or Power, as the all-originating, all-governing Righteousness, unless it be good, unless it wishes well to all things, to all creatures? It is impossible. Then the way is open for a profound piety, for unspeakable gratitude and love. However incomprehensible is that Infinitude of being, if in the centre of all is an infinite love, we may render to it the homage of our whole soul, and say, "let all within us praise it." We may be swallowed up in it as the blessing, the beatitude, the joy of our lives. For is it not the sublimest joy, to know that we have our being in a glorious system of things which rests upon this everlasting foundation — righteousness, and an all-loving righteousness. Mr. Tyndall, in common with some of the ancient sages, shrinks from all words, as applicable to it; he will not even call it "a cause." But can he or anybody else, doubt that there is manifested, in this universe, a *preference of good to evil?* Let this good be happiness, or let it be moral good; is not a preference of it, the manifestation of an all-loving righteousness?

Why, my friends, do I labor to establish this primal truth of all religion? It is because it is the consecra-

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tion of the universe. It is not because a belief in it is necessary to salvation. It is not because creeds declare, and pulpits preach it. It is not alone because all human interests, all order and welfare, rise or fall with it. But it is because of its own transcendent glory and beauty; because to extinguish it, would be to put out the light of life, to darken the sun in the heavens, to disrobe all nature of its charm and loveliness. Without it, life would lose its sanctity, and the mind its centre: all its loftiest tendencies would be disowned, all its highest aspirations crushed down; an orphanage would come upon the world, more desolate, than if all earthly parents were cut down at a blow — orphanage that would cut us off from the Father in heaven. It would be treason against the imperial grandeur of the universe. All the wonders of power and wisdom and beneficence that fill and crowd all existence from the minutest point on earth, to the majestic stars on high, demand and enforce this religious homage — the greatest that man can render, and itself his own greatness; and a homage which all greatest souls must desire to render.

And therefore it is, that some men, who have been called Atheists, were not altogether such. Spinoza was not, and Auguste Comte was not, and Strauss was not altogether such. They felt that there was something behind all, the Cause of all, that was to be adored and worshipped. They thought that it could not be formulated in any human speech or idea; that was the amount of their denial. But they all felt, I think — how could they help it? — that there was something, a divine glory, shining through the heavens and the earth, and through the human soul, behind and above the things themselves.

I have endeavored, in this discourse to show you

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that. The celebrated chemist, Sir Humphry Davy, said — "the greatest blessing that I know or crave in life, is a firm religious faith." I think I have shown you the ground for that. It is impregnable; it is undeniable. I have known men, who said that they were Atheists; but I have never seen the man who believed in an infinite malignity, or who denied that *rectitude* is the law of all men, of all societies, of the universe of men and things. Upon that foundation I stand in this discourse. Do not call it a heathen discoursing, though it goes behind Christianity. I believe in Christianity. I accept, I welcome that great teaching. But in an age of doubts and speculations, I deem that it is good to see that there is a divine, a deep-founded, an everlasting *truth* of *things*, on which all religions repose. That which is right, and in being right, is good, by all men's admission and by all nature's testimony, is the eternal and all-holy bond. It is the moral gravitation of the world. It is the solidarity of the universe. It is the manifested will and wisdom and goodness of God. "Now unto Him, the eternal, immortal, invisible, the only wise God, be honor and glory, for ever and ever: amen."

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III.

ON THE REASONABLENESS AND GREATNESS OF DEVOTION.

Ps. lxxiii. 25, 26. — "Whom have I in heaven but Thee, and there is none upon earth that I desire besides Thee. My flesh and my heart faileth; but God is the strength of my heart and my portion forever."

WHAT wonderful language is this, to burst out from the darkness of antiquity, from the depth of dark and idolatrous ages! Dismiss all reverence for David as an inspired person, and come to the matter as a mere philosopher; and what a phenomenon is presented to you! A soul, not merely reverent and awestruck at the thought of God, like that of Zoroaster or Confucius; not alone philosophically and calmly contemplating the Divinity, like Socrates or Cicero; but penetrated through and through with affection as well as veneration; absorbed into the love of this Infinite Being; finding its deepest satisfactions and resources in Him, communing, pleading with Him as if His favor and presence were the only light and joy of life; saying, "whom have I in heaven but Thee; and there is none upon earth that I desire besides Thee;" this, I say, is a phenomenon in human experience, with which there is nothing that I know in heathen antiquity to bear any comparison.

To exhibit fully this phenomenon, it would be necessary to present a picture of ancient heathen devotion, and in contrast with it, to quote large portions of the

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entire Psalms. The poems of Homer for instance, are nearly contemporaneous with the Psalms of David. Those poems are full of prayers and appeals to the Deity. And nothing certainly, can be more remarkable than the contrast between them and the devotions of the king of Israel. The fervor and tenderness of the latter seem like — what they are — the breathings of a soul, divinely touched and taught. And the contrast is the more remarkable, because the Homeric prayers are addressed to a Deity, full of human passions and weaknesses; to whom, on that account, it might be thought, that man could more easily approach. Yet how cold, stately, formal and distant they are; merely asking aid in war or in policy; never throughout, betraying for once, the remotest approach to David's feeling of absorbing interest in the Supreme Being, of his delight in the contemplation of God, of the concentration of all his powers in that joy and worship.

"O Jove" — thus runs the translation of one of the sublimest of the Homeric prayers: —

> "O Jove, most great and glorious! who dost rule
> The tempest, — dweller of the ethereal space!
> Let not the sun go down, and night come on,
> Ere I shall lay the halls of Priam waste,
> With fire, and give their portals to the flames."

It is a prayer, you perceive, against enemies. Hardly to be found I think, in Grecian or Roman antiquity, is a prayer of any one for his own soul, for his spiritual well-being; and nothing approaching to the feeling that treasures up its happiness in God.

In the Zendavesta the words of the old Persian religion, is a prayer, which has something of the former character, but how little has it of the fervor of David's prayer! "O you benign Masters," it says, "who

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reserve for men the reward they merit, remunerate publicly the suppliant who invokes you. May I be pure in this world and happy in the next; and may the soul of Zoroaster, the pure genius, those of all the servants of Ormuzd — i.e. of the good principle — of all the initiated, of all the laborers, of all the artisans of the world, come to meet me in the highest heaven, the seat of happiness. May the accursed source of sin and evil be banished forever! May the world be pure, the heavens excellent, and finally may purity and holiness prevail!"

Scarcely any thing can be more beautiful, nothing that I know in heathen antiquity is so beautiful, as the prayer of the Persian poet, Saadi, "O God, have mercy upon the wicked; for thou hast done every thing for the good, in having made them good."

But turn now from all this, excellent as it is, after its manner, to the language of David. "O God, Thou art my God; early will I seek Thee; my soul thirsteth for Thee; my flesh longeth for Thee, in a dry and thirsty land where no water is; to see Thy power and Thy glory so as I have seen Thee in the sanctuary. Because Thy loving-kindness is better than life, my lips shall praise Thee. Thus will I bless Thee while I live; I will lift up my hands in Thy name." Again, what a touching entreaty was that of David! "Hear my prayer, O Lord and let my cry come before Thee. Hide not Thy face from me, in the day when I am in trouble." "Bow down thine ear, O Lord, hear me; for I am poor and needy. Preserve my soul, for I am holy" — i.e. consecrate to Thee; "O Thou my God, save Thy servant that trusteth in Thee. Be merciful unto me O Lord, for I cry unto Thee daily. Rejoice the soul of Thy servant: for unto Thee do I lift up my soul."

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But this feeling let us now observe, is not peculiar to David. His language is adopted as the nearest to the heart, the more than native language, of a multitude of Christian souls. It is the language of to-day; it never wears out; it is fresh forever; it is perhaps, the only language of antiquity that breathes in the deepest heart of the modern world. You are aware that in the diaries of many religious persons, in the secret records of their experience and also in the teachings of the pulpit and in the public utterances of prayer, this sense is often expressed, not merely of the supremacy, the majesty of God, but of the soul's supreme interest in Him, this sense of nearness to Him, — of His felt presence, and of being swallowed up in Him as the highest satisfaction and sufficiency. I am afraid lest I express myself irreverently: but I suppose that no language however strong, can adequately express the mind's desire of knowing and communing with the Infinite Being; and this, not because of any mystical peculiarity of the affection, but because of the Infinite Glory and Beauty which it contemplates. It was with this feeling — not to escape evil and perdition — that David said, "my soul thirsteth for God, for the living God; when shall I come and appear before God?"

Now there is a question upon which I would respectfully turn the attention of those who hear me; and that is upon their own view of this highest piety, this highest aspiration after the love and the life of God in the soul. I would fain know, I would fain have it considered with ourselves, what is the thought we entertain of this particular part of the experience of religious and devout men. What think we in this respect, of David and Isaiah, of Paul and John, and of the Christ himself? What think we of Fénelon

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and Jeremy Taylor and Baxter and Brainerd, and of holy men among ourselves, who have died in the odor of sanctity; the very tones of whose touching prayers yet linger in our ears? I know that there are those who feel all this — or who at least, sympathize with it; with nothing in the world so much. But then, there is another class, I cannot be mistaken in supposing, who look upon all this with a distant, and almost repelling awe. It is something very holy, they suppose; they do not venture to call it in question; they suppose it is very proper for certain persons; they admire it in the clergy, and in saints and devotees; but for themselves they know nothing of it; they would be shocked if they found themselves privately adopting as their own, the devout language of David — or of Brainerd: this kind of experience is out of their reach, out of their sphere. I say they commend it in the clergy; but are there not those who, in fact, regard it as something professional, as something unnatural and irrational; as a kind of pious ecstasy or hallucination, as a certain exalted state into which some men work themselves up, or into which their feelings flow periodically, but not in which they live healthily and habitually? Perhaps there are some persons who go yet farther, and say, "what so much need is there, of these great and all-absorbing thoughts of God? What so much need of recognizing His presence and communing with His perfection?" Perhaps it is a pantheistic tendency: perhaps it is the tendency of a mind from which, through worldliness or through re-action against superstition or sanctimony, the religious sentiment has died out. "What need, it says, of devotion? I have all that I want without it. For my sensitive nature here is a world of bounty; and for my æsthetic nature, my taste, here

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is a world of beauty; for my intellect, science and philosophy; for my heart there are beings around me to love. What need of more? I could go on forever so, were it permitted to me. I could go on forever so — contented, satisfied, without worship, without ever lifting my thoughts above, without any need ideally of God; without any need to me that there be a God." In short a man may say, "I understand about being good; I grant the necessity and reasonableness of that; but as to religion, piety, prayer, I do not know; that is another thing."

So much indeed is devotion another thing; so little does it stand in its own right; so little is its natural and noble claim felt, that I much fear it would sink to a lower place than it now holds with many, if it were not for the idea that the *recognition of God* is necessary to save them from perdition. Dread perversion! by which the idea of God instead of filling the universe with light and glory and joy, is but a scourge to drive men to prayer or a screen to shield them from destruction! How many, repelled by such superstitious impressions, are living without God in the world! The very idea they have of the Infinite Life, brings death into their soul!

Against this I would now enter my earnest protest. I would labor to substitute the rational, for the superstitious view of religion. In other words, I would endeavor to vindicate the simple piety of David and of all the communion of saints; to show that it is founded in the deepest nature of the soul, in the deepest reason of things, and is justly productive of the most rational as well as unspeakable comfort and joy.

The point we are to consider, let me observe, is material; it is radical; it lies at the foundation; all our worship, prayer, preaching holds to this, or to

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nothing. It is the point of departure and the point of return, for every thing in our religious institution. If deep, affectionate devotion be not rational; if pantheistic dreaming, if a distant, mere awe-struck superstition can rightly occupy its place, I must take my leave of all religious communion, of all churches, this day. Some kind of moral lectureship might remain here; no more. That which is indeed infinite, the Infinite Glory, Beauty, Life, must be infinite to *me* — or nothing. There is no middle ground, though upon such multitudes attempt to stand. "Whom have I in heaven but Thee," says the enraptured Psalmist: "and there is none upon earth that I desire beside Thee." Is this, profoundest truth; though it presents but one side of the deepest truth: — for humanity too, is to have its place in our regards. Is the Psalmist rational as well as enraptured? Let me attempt to answer.

First, then, in my deepest nature, in the very nature of my soul, there is a necessity — bond, strong as my life, strong as my being — that connects me with Him who made me. I hardly know how to express this feeling. It seems to me like a revelation: and yet I believe that it is a part of human nature. And I am not now considering the proof of the being of a God, but only the necessity of His being to my mind. The thought of Him, is counterpart to every thought I have. Every thing in me, bears reference to Him: mind in me, to an Infinite Mind; power in me to a Power without me; conscience in me, to a Conscience all around me. The silent air, the solemn infinitude of space, the boundless heavens, seem to me full of that — that Infinite Presence. Like gravitation in the material world, so is the thought of God in the universe of mind. It is supposed; it is implied; it is the inevitable basis and bond of every thing. That centre

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in the circle of thought gone, and every thing is gone. That bond broken, and all things rush into disorder, into chaos. If a man says, that he does not feel this; I answer, neither does he consciously feel many things that are true. There are many that never *heard* of first truths, of intuitive truths, and that have no distinct consciousness of them; and yet thinking men know that, for all minds, there are such truths. And so the thinking, the fully developed man knows that the thought of God is inwrought, by a thousand penetrating ties, into the very frame and foundation of his being. It were as easy to deny the social tendency in man, as to deny this religious tendency. Place a man in a situation that ministered every thing possible to his solitary pleasure, in the most splendid palace, in the fairest garden, and let him dwell there alone; and in sadness and misery he would sigh for companionship. Nothing but the extinction of his social nature, nothing but social insanity, could save him from this misery. And so if you place a man, a large-thinking and fully developed man, in this glorious universe, and blot out for him the thought of God; and he would be miserable; there would be an awful chasm without him, which nothing could fill; a preying want within him, which nothing could appease. Nothing but spiritual death or spiritual insanity, could save him from a feeling of orphanage, more gloomy than the loss of parents, of all friends, of all the world beside.

In the next place, look at the nature of *things*. And is there not a *nature* of things — something beside the things themselves? If the universe were an infinite mass or congeries of mere objects, without any thought or soul, dwelling in them and shining through them, it could possess no interest for us; for us i.e. as reasonable beings. Food for the appetite, there might be;

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and color and form for the eye, and sound for the ear, and relish for the palate. These things in nature meet doubtless and gratify certain sensitive needs. But for the mind that thinks, for the moral soul that feels, there must be something more in nature than food and form and sound. There *is a meaning;* an informing soul; an all-pervading wisdom; an interpenetrating love; without which philosophy itself would be barren; and faith, dead; and communion with nature, a senseless phrase; and the universe, with all its visible glories, a dreary blank. And if I were contending here for the being of a God, I might say that this clearly adapted, this spiritually receptive faculty of the soul, is itself a powerful argument. When you examine the structure of the eye, you say without doubt, this is an organ for light: the telescope is not more evidently made for light, than is the eye. If all were brooding darkness yet; and while in fact, all is brooding darkness to the unborn; still you say, this organ was made for light: light is to come; somewhere there is light. Not less clearly is the soul, in its essential structure, an organization adapted to spiritual light, to moral beauty, to the contemplation of the Divinity. A teacher of the Deaf and Dumb, once told me that he always found that faculty, that adaptation of the soul, ready to receive and welcome the idea of God, when first communicated. The soul may be very blind yet; its powers may yet be but slightly developed; but somewhere there must be a spiritual glory for it to behold.

And indeed our argument for its *action*, i.e. for devotion, springs naturally from this consideration of its structure. The argument, too, is as clear as that from our social nature to social affection. And we must remember, to make the parallel complete, that

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man, the essential man, man in his essence, is, amidst all the crowded life around us, as invisible as God. Now if we regarded men as mere facts, mere forms; if we recognized no soul in them and felt no soul in ourselves flowing out to them, society would be mere mechanism. Social affection, social communing it is, that spreads over human intercourse, its inexpressible charm. And so if the forms of nature were mere forms or mere mechanical combinations; if there were no soul in them and no soul in us flowing out to it, the universe would be disrobed of all its charm; the world would not be a home; and without Father, Guardian or Guide, we should wander through the earth as outcasts and orphans.

But let us commune with God in nature; let the mountain heights be altars of prayer, and the ocean waves murmur hymns of thanksgiving; let the glory of setting suns be the shrine of devotion, and the silent invisible air the breathing of God's presence, and the boundless light, the shining out of the infinite love and beauty; and then, no language can tell the blessing and joy of that beatific vision. A thousand worlds coined into gold and cast at our feet, would be as mere pebbles upon the sea-shore, compared with that vision. What is matter to me, but for that which it manifests? Dead, inert, useless, till I see in it, the Life divine. That seen, an infinite treasure is found; a boundless joy felt; but never before. What is matter, I repeat, but for its uses? Why, even the voluptuary says, the cup is nothing, but for the relish of it. But there are higher souls, that drink a richer draught from the cup of nature — brimming to its golden rim of the horizon round, with God's bounty and loveliness. Is it not for this chiefly, that nature is to be valued? What deep things, indeed, are there in nature!

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What depths yet unfathomed of wisdom and love and beauty! What deep things are there in our souls too; things of wonder and mystery, of "passion and glory" and sorrow and aspiration! What depths does music open within us; realms through which no criticism has ever yet travelled! What deep chords in us are struck by the wonder-inspiring tones of poetry and uttered human speech, sounding through lower deeps that never yet found tongue or pen to utter them! These all point to the infinite, ineffable, all-encompassing grandeur and loveliness. Out of these depths does the soul "cry out for God, for the living God." I have seen that passion in great souls; and sometimes thought they pressed too far, or rather I should say, with unwise assumption, as to what they can reach; but it is the grandest passion of humanity; and its satisfaction the grandest that humanity can know.

In the third place, and finally—not only is a humble and devout communion with God, the soul's instinctive and primal need, and nature's grandest ministration, but it is to the heart, a comfort and reliance indispensable. "My flesh and my heart faileth," says the Psalmist; "but God is the strength of my heart and my portion forever."

Comfort is a word sufficiently utilitarian; all men would find comfort. But can the softest clothing, the most luxurious ministration to the appetites, the warm fireside and the folding curtains, and cushions of ease and luxury, minister all that we want of comfort? In the business and hurry of life, the mind is indeed occupied, but not comforted: far otherwise, as you well know; vexed and wearied rather. But when the day's care is ended and the mind sinks to repose, when the solitary and silent hour cometh, in that silence and solitude of thought, does not the mind

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feel the need of a resource beyond all that business and success and fortune and worldly splendor can impart? And can society or family or friends fill the mind's thought, need, or desire? It is a question of experience. If there be those who can say that the social ministration is enough, with them my argument, or this part of it at least, fails. But who can say it? Whose mind does not soar above all things finite, for its rest and sufficiency? Whose thought does not penetrate where the outstretched arms of human friendship cannot follow nor support it — into the realm of death, into the regions of immortality; into depths of need, into heights of aspiration, which only infinite goodness can fill?

Nor is it in solitude alone that this is felt; but yet more if possible, in the fullest sense of earthly joy and glory. When I stand upon the top of the world, then it is that I look beyond — to God and to eternity. And when touched with all the ministering powers of this universe to me; when the trances of vision and sound steal over me; and the breath and fragrance of summer fields, and the soundless ocean of light and beauty above, bathe me in their mysterious life; and I hope and long, in such "high hour," that this universe shall yet, as a divinely attuned instrument, become harmonized to my being and sing eternal anthems in mine ears; in what can my hope seek fulfilment and fruition but in God? He to whom that high path of thought is opened, must desire to pursue it forever; and when he sees the dark barrier of the grave before him, what joy is it for him to be enabled to say, "though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, Thy rod and Thy staff, they shall comfort me."

"My flesh and my heart faileth," says the psalmist:

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and they often do fail even in these high meditations. But they fail too and that utterly, beneath many a crushing blow, that falls upon us in this world. And under such infliction the sinking heart cries out for help divine, for help beyond all mortal help, as naturally, as the frail, suffering infant cries out for its mother's arm. I speak not of lighter griefs now, which may be smothered in worldly engagements or pleasures; the deep and desolate sorrow of bereavement is another thing; and it feels that nothing but God, nothing but a power beyond itself and beyond the world, can help it. A *faith*, a *faith in God*, is the one, only thing that it wants and seeks, and prays for *then*. And when that faith comes; when the heart that God hath suffered to be broken that it may open to receive the infinite treasure, when that heart says, "it is my Father's hand; not evil but good does it intend for me; I am surrounded and embosomed in infinite love:" *that* is a revelation, *that* is a support and comfort, compared with which all the treasures of the world, are as nothing.

I have thus attempted, feebly I know, to vindicate the reasonableness and grandeur of devotion; to set forth this great, inspired idea of the knowledge and love of God, as entitled to the most rational confidence and acceptance. But alas! this is not the ordinary experience; rather do we hear, on every hand, complaints of coldness and deadness in this particular relation. This fact justifies, I conceive, the frequency with which in our discourses from the pulpit, we return to the theme on which I have now been meditating — the knowledge and love of God. To my thought, this is no arbitrary condition of salvation, but the natural and necessary law of our highest welfare. Just as I should say — without refinement, without a

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cultivated mind and taste, without, at least, an admiration and enthusiasm for the high, heroical and beautiful in character, you cannot attain to an elevated happiness; so, and only far *more*, should I say — without the love of God, you cannot reach the height of joy, of beatitude for which your nature was made. Just as I should lament over one, who had no feeling for music, for art, for the beauty of nature or for the beauty of human genius or virtue; so, and only the more, must I lament over him, who has no feeling for the divine majesty and loveliness that shine through all the beauty of nature and humanity, and through all supernal natures and all the glory of the heavenly worlds. Is he to be pitied who never gazes with emotion upon a glorious sunset; whose plodding eye, ever fixed upon the ground, never sees it? And what then shall we think of him who never sees and never adores the Glory, that is enshrined in the tabernacle of parting day, in the splendors of morning, and in the awful depths of the noontide heaven?

Why — let me say to those who complain of the coldness and deadness of their devout affections — why do you not, putting away all superstition, look at this subject in the light of simple reason? You do, from time to time, unless you are an utterly stupid and earth-born soul — you do admire the things, which elevated and purified, are the very idea of God. You look at the beauty, the glory of a gorgeous sunset, and it fills you with rapture. You gaze at a picture of moral loveliness and grandeur, hero, saint or martyr, and you are melted into tears before it. You behold the loveliness of living human virtue; you read of noble disinterestedness; you read of those who die for their country or for mankind — of those, who, touched with pity for human sorrows, wear out their lives to

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relieve the poor, the sick and the miserable, the outcast, the wandering and the insane; and your gushing sympathy and admiration testify that you feel all this. But all this, and all that you can admire and love, refined from all earthly imperfection and elevated above all human grandeur and loveliness, is the very idea of God. The separate traits of mercy, here collect into one infinite Goodness. The scattered rays of light here gather into one infinite splendor. That Light and Love are not withdrawn from us to an immeasurable distance, but visit us and beam and breathe upon us in sacred and tender pity. The Infinite Goodness is not far off, but near us; it compasses our path and our lying down, and is acquainted with all our ways. The evening shade, the guarded sleep, the morning resurrection; the clothing air and the cheering light; every bounty that falls from heaven — every bounty, that springs from earth; every loving heart that blesses us; every sacred example that wins us; every holy page that teaches us; holy men, blessed apostles, heroic martyrs, the Son of God Himself, "the brightness of God's glory and the express image of His person" — all these are the revelation, the presence, the manifested love of the One, all-holy, all-perfect, ever-blessed, the incomprehensible, the ineffable; whom to know is life, whom to resemble is perfection, whom to love, is the divinest bliss. Of Him, what less can we say than this: "whom I have in heaven but thee, and there is none upon earth that I desire beside thee. My flesh and my heart faileth; but God is the strength of my heart and my portion forever."

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IV.

THE ALTERNATIVE.

1 Cor. xv. 32. — "If, after the manner of men I have fought with beasts at Ephesus, what advantageth it me, if the dead rise not? Let us eat and drink; for to-morrow we die."

The alternative here presented, I propose, in this discourse, to consider; and that in regard not alone to the particular points specified in the text, but in general, to the great fundamental truths of religion. If we do not accept them, what then? The alternative, I say; this is the point, and may be the title of my discourse. Religion in its ground principles, or no religion; a firm and happy faith, or the great dread waste and blank of unbelief; this is the alternative.

Let us then, I say, take our stand decidedly on one ground or the other. If this world is our only world, let us occupy it as such. If the senses are the only sources of enjoyment, let us use them as such. But on the contrary, if there is a life above sense and beyond the world, let us act upon that conviction; fighting the good fight of faith manfully, meeting toil, trial, conflict, martyrdom, with courage. Such alternative it is, that for certain ends in our religious meditation, I wish to present to you.

It is the duty of the preacher to contribute what he can, to the amount of human happiness; to do what he can, to conduct men's minds to wise conclusions and just principles of living. And especially is it his

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duty, when the mental culture of the world is running to discontent, to anxiety, and to that miserable incertitude, which arises from the breaking up of old faiths or old modes of reasoning, without the definite settling of new ones. This, I think, is the condition of many at the present day. There are many minds, I conceive, which are not grounded upon any system, either of belief or of unbelief; which are practically settled neither upon Theism nor Atheism; neither upon Providence nor chance; neither upon Bible ground nor upon infidel ground; neither upon this life nor another life, but are in a middle region, between the two, wandering in shadows, seeing nothing clearly, feeling nothing distinctly; in a position, in short, alike false to reason, and painful to experience.

Now I do not propose to deal at large with this vague and unsettled way of thinking; I desire to bring every thing here, to a single point. And the point is this — that but one of the two great opposing ideas about religion can be true; that from any just conduct of the understanding it will follow that one or the other of them must be adopted. And then having stated this point, I wish to inquire whether some important practical principles would not follow from such decision.

I say then, that of the two opposing theories, the theory of religion and the theory of no religion, but one can be true. In regard to the minor points of creeds, there may be selection and combination, a spiritual eclecticism; but we cannot deal so with the foundation doctrines. We cannot take something from Atheism and something from Theism, something from the doctrine of Providence, and something from the doctrine of chance, and so compound one system. This is impossible. We are obliged to make our

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election, and to abide by it. A God we must believe in, or no God; a providence or no providence — no Power ruling the world, no sovereign will, no controlling order; in a future life where the blessed shall be forever, or no future life, no hope beyond the grave. To one or other of these creeds we are in reason distinctly bound. In reason we cannot be hovering between them. This is not a case of more or less true or false, but of absolute truth or falsehood. It cannot be partly true that there is a God, a Providence, a future life; it is altogether true, or altogether false.

1. This being stated, the first observation I have to make is, in the spirit of the Apostolic alternative, — which is indeed the keenest irony, that from either of these grounds firmly taken, I could draw more tranquillity and more comfort as it appears to me, than most men do from their half-way belief. For suppose there were no personal Divinity, who careth for us, and no future life. Our being then, is but the chance evolution of infinite motion; the ephemera of a day in the eyes of eternity. Matter and mind strangely resolved themselves into this compact form, this breathing frame; and soon it shall be unbound again from the golden chain of existence, and we shall no more belong to the living universe. It is indeed a blank and barren scepticism; but even from this might be obtained the tranquillity of *apathy*. Why shouldst thou care much for any thing, if this breath of life is all; if it is to be extinguished soon and forever, and may be at any moment? "Let us eat and drink," says the Apostle, "for to-morrow we die." Let us idle or trifle away the time; for it is not worth a deeper thought. As a theory, to be sure, this is dreadfully unsatisfactory; and its unsatisfactoriness is an argument for something better. But if that better be

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firmly rejected; if man's being is but the accident of an hour; if his fortunes are but bubbles on the ever-flowing stream; if his life is but as the life of animal, bird or insect, let him sport it away as they do. Let him derive his wisdom from the conditions of his being. His being is, indeed, on that supposition, but "a fortuitous concourse of atoms;" and his wisdom is, to think deeply, to care deeply for nothing. The supineness and levity consequent on such a theory would indeed, be shocking to reason and to faith; but to the theory itself they would not be shocking. They are the proper and natural state of utter scepticism. Whether there are not elements in humanity which such a scepticism cannot satisfy, is another question; but that a life of apathy and vanity is all that such scepticism would naturally lead to, there can be no doubt.

But if, on the contrary, a reasonable faith be accepted as the mind's reliance; if there is a God who "ruleth all things," and if this world and all worlds are under the dominion of His good providence; if it is among the ordinances of His mercy, that we shall surely live hereafter; if there is another life in whose bright and boundless regions we may wander forever — there finding our lost treasures, there gathering the lost ones of earth; then — what then? Oh! is it much that cloud and darkness, for a moment, fall upon the path, that is leading to everlasting brightness? I speak not to the case of bodily pain now, but only of the mind's sorrow and conflict; and I suppose a good mind, a mind intending and striving to be right; and this being supposed, I say, this scene is soon to close, and an eternal one is about to open before us; why shall we be perturbed, restless or anxious about the present? It is only a night's trou-

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ble before the everlasting day that is about to break around us. If a day's travel were to take us to our home, or to some blessed country where we were to dwell in peace and gladness forever, should we think much of that day's annoyances and cares? Let us only believe what we say we believe; that God is our keeper and guide, and will one day conduct our feet to the everlasting abodes; and then although life's trouble and death's change must be felt, and must be feared in a measure, yet will they be swallowed up in the over-ruling sentiment of trust, in the over-ruling sentiment of the future. Let me *believe* and not merely *say* I believe. Let God's presence be an abode with me, and heaven a reality, the home of my hope; and then I can be strong and patient and cheerful and victorious, in that all-conquering faith.

2. In the next place, of these two theories, what are the comparative moral tendencies? which is the best theory? which is the noblest? Which is fitted to make the best and noblest men? You would hardly have patience with me, if I were to discuss this question seriously, or at length. I have said that the theory of utter scepticism might lead to the calm of utter indifference; but that, I think, is all that it can do, which wears any appearance of benefit to man. Certainly no lofty virtues could spring from it. Nay, I believe it is universally admitted that the absolute denial of a providence and a future life, would whelm the world in utter moral ruin. I think that every man must be conscious for himself, that to his own virtue such scepticism would be a terrible if not a fatal shock. But at any rate, however the virtue formed by religious convictions, might stand for a while, after the convictions failed, it is clear that it would be altogether impossible to *train up* the human race to any lofty

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improvement, to any self-restraint, or self-sacrifice, to any noble achievements, public or private, under a system that had expelled from the world all faith, whether in God, or providence, or futurity — under a system that made this earth the product of chance, and this life the end of human existence. In such a case human history had not been worth writing, and human life had not been worth living. The human race would have sunk down to brutish sense if it ever rose for a moment above that grade. And can there be any serious doubt in a case like this? One theory would make brutes, and the other men; one, a history, and the other no history, nothing to tell of the world worth telling; one, poetry, art, beauty, inspiration, the other, nothing but granaries and money-vaults: can there be any doubt? For it really comes to this; whether we are to hold the loftiest and noblest sentiments in the world to be illusions, and the lowest and most worldly sentiments to be the only stable realities.

Now I have only to ask one further question. Not which is noblest merely, but for which do you judge that human nature was made? For vice or for virtue; for evil or for good; for brutish indulgence or for sacred purity; for ferocious cruelty or for gentle pity and love; for violence and ruin, in short, or for order, improvement and happiness? Judge, I say, between these; for, as you choose, so must you adopt either the system of faith, or the system of no faith. If you take vice, evil, brutality, ferocity, ruin, for your choice, lo! here is the very instrument for their production, fitted to your hand; scepticism, a thorough conviction that there is nothing beyond the senses to live for, or hope for — this will inevitably produce all these results. But if, on the contrary, you believe that virtue, good, purity, love, well-being, are the ends

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for which the human soul was made, then your part, your inevitable choice is faith; faith in God, in providence, in immortality. Judge, I say. But you *have* judged already. Every institution of government, every court of law, every schoolhouse, not to say every church, is standing evidence of your conviction, that man is made for improvement and well-being, and not for deterioration and destruction.

And if all this be true, into what a strange and horrible supposition must the sceptic be thrown! I do not know that I am speaking to one such sceptic; but I wish to show to you who believe, yet all too feebly believe, how strong is the ground for faith. For I say into what a strange and horrible supposition is the sceptic thrown! It is even this; that the welfare of the world is made to depend on a lie. That welfare, it is certain, depends on faith; and faith, he holds, is all a delusion, a falsehood, a lie. Surely the mind that has come to that point, touches on chaos; the moral elements of the universe must seem to it to be whirling about in wild confusion; and for my own part, I know of nothing that would so make me feel as if I had come to the very verge of insanity, as that tremendous disorder of my reason within me, and of the universe around me.

3. But I go farther; and I ask now if it is possible for human experience to do without religion, and faith in religion. Let the elements of human nature be developed into whatsoever forms they will — into whatsoever apathy, or levity, or recklessness, or passion, or excess or violence; is it possible that they can be wrought into any satisfactory combination with unbelief? On that barren rock, can the hardest human bosom lean and find repose? The question is not now, can this theory make human nature good; but can human nature bear it; can it endure such a theory?

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When I ask this question, my brethren, a large range of experience comes within my view; of experience, natural indeed, but strong, nay wild and fearful too, and mixing itself up with a troubled scene of events. We are made with undying affections. Erring, lawless, wild as they may be, yet they are unquenchable. Do what we will to ourselves, we cannot annihilate ourselves; and we cannot smother the inward yearnings of our souls. This, that I say, is not a matter of sentiment, but a matter of fact. So are we made. To desire, to fear, to hope, to love, is a necessity. In apathy, that grave of the soul, we may bury our affections, and think they are dead; but to-morrow they will rise again, with renewed and immortal vigor. And now, such a nature as this — where is it put to act its part? Into a world of change, decay, dissolution! The beings whom our affections grasp, as if forever, lo! they die! — they vanish! What a change! One moment before, my friend was here; the fullest circle and measure of reality was here with me; a presence that filled the surrounding space with light — a presence that made the very air breathe and throb as with living pulses; and now in his place, is — nothing! and the breathless wonder of the bereft one can only shriek or sigh in the awful void — nothing! And yet, though the undying thought is thus bound to the dying object, yet can it never learn its lesson; never can it, so to speak, adjust itself to death; but ever since the first pall was spread over the face of man, the same tears have been poured out upon it, the same shudderings have shaken mortal hearts as they bent over it; and the same wild and distracted affections have rushed to the barriers of time, and demanded of eternity their lost treasures. Oh! if there were no answer — if there were no hereafter, might we not bow

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before the dread Author of our being, and say, why—why hast thou made us thus? Why could we not forget as the bird its young, or the hare its mate? Why must our affections linger on in living death, and wear and waste us to the grave, if they are not the harbingers of something *beyond* the grave?

And then again, how naturally, how irresistibly do our thoughts break forth beyond the bounds of this world, into the regions of the everlasting and the infinite! I have said that on the sceptic's theory, man should be content with earth, and think of nothing beyond; but can he keep his thoughts bound to earth? No, he cannot. There is ever a wave beneath him, coming from eternity and going to eternity, sweeping him on; and his soul can never take root in the visible realities of the present hour. Or he is as one who builds his house on an isthmus between two rushing seas. While they are wearing away the foundation, his thought embarks itself upon those boundless floods, unknowing where they roll, or what distant shores they lave. On this narrow strip of earth man does not walk as the grazing ox or the draught horse, but rather as one that walketh in dreams. Less like the animal is he, at the worst; and more like the ruined archangel of Milton's imagination, treading the uncertain soil of the world on which he is fallen, and exploring on every side, the dim regions of undefined possibility. What an exploring *that* is, what a sighing for light, the wide spread of spiritualism or spiritism, proves. No, this is not an imaginary being of whom I speak; it is you, my friend; it is myself. I might say, perhaps, that in right of our thought, we feel that we belong to other worlds than this; that a little more or less of distance is not material; that as the earth is ours, alike is the solar

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system, is the sidereal heaven ours. But this much I may certainly say; that this world can no more content us, than any one field in it, could content us; and that, for the same reason; because we see beyond it—far, far, infinitely beyond it.

Bound, now, the prospect by the dreary negations of the sceptic school; no God, no providence, no life hereafter. I can conceive a mind so constituted as to be really flung sometimes, upon this resort. I can conceive of a mind that may say; "well, since it is my sad fortune to be certain of nothing in the spiritual realm, I will stretch myself on this narrow ground of visible reality, and see what relief, what comfort I can find there." What can he find? Despair!—for all the greatness and the great hope of his nature, nothing but this—dark, desolate, brooding despair! The transparent skies fold themselves into a heavy and impenetrable veil around him; the earth is a tomb; the stars are but lights of a gloomy sepulchre. "But no," it may be said, "even to the sceptic it still is a fair world; it is a bright world; and bright is the hour of life that is passed upon it." Extract from human nature certain elements—the undying affection, the infinite desire, the longing after something above and beyond; make it, in other words, an animal nature, and all this is true. But so long as this nature is human, it must have aspirings, needs, ay, and conflicts, crosses, sorrows. Events cannot pass over us like summer clouds. The earth cannot be to us a bosom of repose. We must fight our battle; and, in that battle, the soul must rise to victory, or it must sink to despair. But how can it fight on the sceptic's field? All its aspirations denied, all its hopes crushed, all its ambition mocked; no end for it but a grave; no monument but a tomb; no guerdon but annihilation; where can it

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find courage for its conflict? Nowhere. It is sent to do that which it cannot do. It is sent to do that which, by supposition, it has no motive nor means for doing.

I say it fearlessly; no greater incongruity was ever conceived of, than that which would exist between such a nature and such a fate. Beneath the heavens, through all the range of nature, was never found such an incongruity. If you saw a noble bird, fallen by some mischance into a quicksand, and there vainly struggling till it sank and perished, you would look on with pity, and say, "Ah! poor denizen of air and sky; thou wast never made to strive with an element like that." If you saw a whole tribe of winged creatures, involved by an ordinance of nature, in a fate like that, you would stand aghast. You *know* that in the whole round of nature, no such terrible solecism can be found. And is there a being, and a whole race of beings, made in aspiration to soar to heaven, to spread the wing over the infinite depths, to stretch its flight through the boundless ages; and is this race doomed, in successivē millions, to struggle with the gross elements of earth, to struggle in vain, and to sink at last, the hapless victims of some stupendous miscreation? Is this fair earth then, but the disastrous gulf of wrecked generations? Have they come out from the bosom of the infinite — those troops and myriads of souls, instinct with thoughts divine and hopes immortal, only to perish on this shore of dark and dread mischance? Forbid it, reason, religion! Earth, heaven, forbid it! It were an intolerable fate. The supposition is intolerable.

My friends, I have thus endeavored to strengthen in you and in myself, those great reliances, in which are all our stability and consolation. For this purpose I have thought it good to throw the mind upon the only

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alternative; and, by showing the intolerableness both to reason and experience of that alternative, to bring new support to the great principles of our faith.

It appears to me, that both our temptations and afflictions are doubled by the want of decision about those principles. Let the tempted man think of it. If over the place of threatened dereliction, political, social or sensual — if over that spot bends the eye of all-witnessing God; if the infinite Authority, the infinite Sacredness is *there*, forbidding the deed; canst thou do it? *Is* it there, or is it *not* there? Settle that; for thou must act accordingly. Let the sufferer think of it. Say, my friend, if there is a God; if he is good; if all the events of life are the ordinances of his wisdom and goodness; if *all* is good, if *all* is *best;* if we are convinced that it is best, that sickness and pain and death should be here, even though we cannot altogether see why; and if we assuredly believe, that when this dream of life is over, the broken ties of earth shall be knitted up again, and the families of earth shall walk together in the regions of heaven — say, if all this is true, can we not lift up our heads from every prostrating blow? Can we not smile *through our tears?* Can we not hold our hearts firm in good hope and cheerful trust?

4. But, in any case and upon either theory, I say, in the last place, that this life is not worth the anxieties which we give it; that this life ought not to be clothed about with wasting solicitudes. How long it shall last; when or how it shall end, — is of less importance than we make it. It is of less importance in the all-wise account; why shall we not strive to make it so in ours?

But, at any rate, the very uncertainty of life, the very insecurity of its possessions, is an argument for

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indifference on the one hand, or for all-conquering faith on the other. Hast thou not lost a parent, a child, or a friend dearer than life? Last week, last month, did not thine acquaintance die; as good, as strong as thou? Dost thou not see all things goodly and fair on earth, swept away as summer clouds? If thou art but as one of these transitory and vanishing shadows, then take thy lot with appropriate indifference; thy being is not worth a further thought or care. If God careth not for it, why shalt thou care? Or, if there is no God, why shalt thou care for any thing? But if thou art the child of heaven, if thou art as one who shall triumph over all that is frail and mortal, and live forever, then tread the things of earth beneath thy feet, and stand girded and hoping in the immortal paths.

For my own part, I have long striven to adjust my mind, if I may so express myself, to this great event of death. I do not say that I have succeeded. But this is what I am disposed to say, as the result of my present thinking. Let us see each death, more than we do, as coming under the general ordinance. Should it seem a strange or shocking thing that one dieth? Why, all men are dying. It is the tale of ages; it is the experience of thousands this hour; even while I have been speaking, thousands have departed from this life; it is what shall soon be your lot and mine; it shall in a few years, sweep away the whole living generation. That great course of nature, that transition which is passing upon the whole living universe, should it be a shock, a catastrophe as it were, to rend the world? Ought it to be so, that distraction and agony should wait around this great, all-comprehending ordinance of divine wisdom? Would the good God have appointed it, if it had been for any thing but

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good? If it be good, should we reject it? And if it were evil, can we resist it? Even then would I yield to no unmanly weakness. Even then would I welcome the stoic's firmness, or the sceptic's apathy. If I could say nothing better when the hour came, I would say with Mirabeau, to his surrounding friends; "to-day I shall die; nothing remains but to be enveloped with perfumes, to be crowned with flowers, to be surrounded with music; and so to enter peaceably into the eternal sleep." But, thanks be to God! for us, believers, there is a better hope. In that better hope, shame were it for us, if we have not a better calmness, a better courage. When others die then, let us not mourn as those who have no hope; but let us still feel that we may hold them dear, and hold them for our own, in the great faith of God and of immortality. And when our own time is come, let us calmly wrap the mantle of death about us, and say, in the words of our great Master and Forerunner — "Father, the hour is come; and we come to Thee. To Thee, all-Goodness, all Wisdom — to Thee, O Thou Infinitude of life and love, we come; and in peace, in prayer, and in faith, yield ourselves to Thy will."

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V.

TRUTH IN ALL RELIGIONS.

Mic. vi. 6, 7, 8. — "Wherewith shall I come before the Lord, and bow myself before the high God? Shall I come before him with burnt offerings, with calves of a year old? Will the Lord be pleased with thousands of rams, or with ten thousands of rivers of oil? Shall I give my firstborn for my transgression, the fruit of my body, for the sin of my soul? He hath showed thee, O man, what is good: and what doth the Lord require of thee, but to do justly, and to love mercy, and to walk humbly with thy God?"

The questions here asked concerning Religion, and the comprehensiveness of the answer, seem to me to make a fit introduction to the kind of discourse which I propose to you this morning. It is a time of *many* questions about *religion*, the time we live in; and it naturally leads us to wish to settle our minds upon the Great Subject as far as we can, by positive and comprehensive statements; to look at religion, with the largest view, as root, and growth, and branch, and fruit: — and by fruit, I mean the result and outcome of the whole matter. For in any interest whether for thought or action, which is vital and fundamental with us, and religion is both, we must begin with the roots and grounds of it; then, we naturally proceed to its springing up, to its unfolding — how it grew and by what means; then to its modifications or branches, and the fair view and construction of them; and finally to the fruit of all, the product and end to be sought, from all these diversities of human opinion and institution.

I. First then, I find the roots of all religion in human

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nature — set there by the hand that made it. I need not dwell upon this point, for I think it is very well understood among us; though perhaps, not often enough, recognized. I believe in primal intuitions of truth, of right, of religion. Without this foundation, no religion could be built up in the human soul. Without these original intuitions, no word about religion could ever be understood. What do the words, good, just, right, religious, mean? Take away the interpreting conscience, and nobody would know. You might as well speak them to the horse or the ox. It is with religious culture in man, as with all other. Take away the original, intuitive axioms, and there could be no geometry. Take away the fundamental perceptions of beauty, and there could be no Art. Take away first truths, from our moral reasonings, and there could be neither Ethics nor Philosophy. In all nature there are germs of growth; and so there are in human nature. But this is too plain to insist upon.

II. In the second place, the development of religion, its unfolding and growth have appeared under various systems of thought, of culture and ritual in successive ages; but I wish now to say that the unfolding has appeared particularly in written records — in books, which may be called the Bibles of the ages, as the Vedas and the Koran: and notably in our holy Scriptures, both of the Old and New Testament. In these are found I believe the greatest religious utterances that have ever been heard in the world.

The old Hebrew Spiritualism, first, in the devotions of David and the sublimity of Isaiah, surpasses every thing that appeared in their time. And I know of nothing in antiquity, that compares with the ideas of polity, of justice and kindness, which the statutes of Moses disclose — restraining despotic power, mitigat-

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ing slavery, requiring lenity to strangers, consideration for the poor that gleaned the harvest fields, and merciful treatment of animals even, and the like — or that equals in tenderness and pathos, the stories of Joseph, of Esther and of Ruth.

Not that *every* thing in these records of the Hebrew religion is to be accepted. The cosmogony, i.e. the origination of things, cannot be. The historic verity cannot be; nor even the morality always; as for instance, the war-spirit and practice of the conquerors of Canaan. Nor is it to be supposed that God gave his sanction to every thing that the Hebrew people did or said, or wrote in the Old Testament. There is a popular mistake about that phrase — "thus saith the Lord." It simply expressed the Leader's or Prophet's conviction that he acted or spoke in accordance with the divine Will. In that grand chapter, the 1st of Isaiah, when the prophet says, "your new moons and your appointed feasts my soul hateth; they are a trouble unto me; I am weary to bear them;" this is not to be taken as the language of God, but the prophet's own highly figurative language, in which he sets forth God's displeasure at the empty ceremonies and hypocrisies of the people. And that every thing in the moral notions inculcated, is not right, must be regarded by Christians, as evident from the fact that Jesus contradicted and superseded those old Hebrew ideas about hating enemies — about "an eye for an eye, and a tooth for a tooth." But I lay down for you a better law — is what he says.

And yet while these concessions are to be made, it would be a pity not to see what grandeur, what beauty there is, in these old Bible records. There is nothing more difficult for the highest genius, taste, and piety combined, than to write a book of prayer and praise.

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David wrote his Psalms, more than two thousand years ago, and they have sufficed for the most cultivated nations and ages ever since; they are read and chanted in ten thousands of churches, this day; and nothing has ever surpassed or equalled them. Is this marvel, thus standing out in the eyes of all men, to be slurred over by criticisms upon some of his language? The imprecations of David are often referred to, as a blot upon his writings; but I confess that I am not disposed to give them up to the common unqualified disparagement. Why shall not a man *feel* the causeless wrong that is done him? Why may he not wish that it shall be visited with the evil that it deserves? Why not that it shall be punished? It *is* punished. God punishes it. Shall we assume to be more merciful than God? There is a place for justice as well as mercy, for indignation as well as pity. Jesus, whose glorious hyperboles in behalf of mercy, were not meant for literal teachings — Jesus himself once looked round about him with indignation; and at other times, denounced the heaviest woes upon his enemies, the hypocritical Pharisees. And Paul, when he stood a bound and helpless prisoner, before the Jewish Council, and the high priest commanded them that stood by, to smite him on the mouth, — "Paul said unto him, God shall smite thee, thou whited wall." I don't think that was amiably said; and I respect him the more, for his feeling and for expressing his feeling, at such an indignity.

Turn now from the great Psalmist of Israel, to the Hebrew prophets, and see what men these were. No such men ever stood up in any other nation, or age of the world. Their appearance is positively a phenomenon in history. But look at them, I say, not as phenomenal persons only, not merely as inspired prophets, but

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as *men*, rising up to challenge every wrong public or private, loving their country, pleading with God and man for its good; but speaking in the face, and in peril, of kingly wrath and popular indignation, in tones of unsparing rebuke. They were the real kings of that old Hebrew time. Think of men rising up among *us*, to speak to President and people, in the way they did; ay, speaking to the people of Boston or New York, as they did to Jerusalem, and its priests and rulers! Not every thing that they said is, indeed, of interest to us now; but they have left their mark upon the religious history of the world.

Other ancient teachers, the Brahmins and Buddhists, spoke, indeed, grand words and fine, for truth and righteousness. Admirable sentences may be quoted from them. Yet I find them generally to be abstract and vague. But the Hebrew prophets struck down deep into the conscience, into daily life, into the sins and backslidings of the people. And when you read what the Hebrew seers said of the Supreme Being, think what it was! They broke down with one blow, the whole system of Idolatry, and set up instead, without idol or image, the sublime idea of one, sole, sovereign, immaterial and invisible God! It was a wonderful revelation to the old, idolatrous ages.

But when we come to the Christian development of religion, a far higher and wider range of ideas, duties and hopes, is opened to us. It is not the unity or spirituality of God, alone; it is not merely kindness to men; but God our Father, all men our brethren — immortality, from vague dreams, brought to light; and Jesus the most perfect being, standing before the world in such loveliness as no other, in my eyes, ever stood. It is remarkable that amidst all the question and doubt about him, that there has been, and is now among

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men, no one has ever denied him, this transcendent glory. Even Voltaire and Rousseau admitted it. Voltaire says, "I take the part of the real Jesus, against the errors of the Church about him." Rousseau celebrates, in a well-known passage, the almost miraculous beauty of his teaching and life. The remarkable contributions of recent authorship, to this theme, all bear the same stamp. The writers of the books entitled, "Jesus and his Biographers," and "the Veil partly lifted," of "Ecce Homo," and "Ecce Deus," and Strauss and Renan, the most of them not orthodox, and some of them very sceptical, yet all unite in pouring out homages at his feet — at the feet of the divinest man.

III. Let me now say something, in the third place, of the modifications, the various forms, into which religion has branched out in its growth, and of the view which, I think, is to be entertained of them.

In taking this survey, I stand — or at least, in this discourse, I propose to take a position, above all forms, all dogmatic faiths, all sects. In theology, I differ from others; all men must differ, more or less, one from another. In theology, I dispute; I accept or I reject this or that. But in a larger philosophy, taking the broadest view of religion, I think a man might say, without any undue assumption — I comprehend all; I quarrel with none.

When I look even at heathenism in religion, and when I see that, at the time, there could be no better; that men's minds could reach to nothing higher, I say, I am glad there was that. I do not scorn it, nor brand it as utterly bad. I find something to sympathize with, in the religion of the darkest ages — the ultimate intent, the looking up to heaven, with dim and awe-struck gaze. The miner welcomes any shining grains

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of golden ore, however incrusted with rust and rubbish. As childhood, in its ignorance, its errors and crudities of conception, is to be regarded with tenderness and forbearance, so is heathenism.

For, let it be more distinctly considered that all men's religion, every man's religious system, is of necessity the best that he knows or can conceive of. It is not in human nature to accept an inferior thing, when it sees that which seems to it better. The rudest barbarians, if better things are offered to them than they have, and which they know to be better — better arms to fight with, better contrivances for hunting, trapping or tillage, could not help adopting them. Nay, and the better things, too *suddenly* put into their hands — exploding guns instead of bows and arrows, steel traps instead of gins and snares — might only injure them, or tear them to pieces. And so with faiths. And so it seems to be a part of the Providential order, that nations and communities in their religion, should advance slowly, to do so safely. New ideas in religion, thrust suddenly upon them, might only tear and rend their religious faith. It would be putting new wine into old bottles, or new cloth to old garments, with the consequences indicated by the Master.

I do not say, of course, that ignorant people and nations should not be taught better things. Certainly I do not object to judicious Christian Missions. But I think it is a wise proceeding on their part, when they direct their special attention to the young, to teaching the children in schools, as Schwartz did, and Mr. Dall is doing in India; or to teaching agriculture and the practical arts *with* religion, as other missionaries, and especially the Roman Catholic have done. Our Protestant missionaries, some of them, have seemed to think, that with the five points — the bare, naked, five

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points thrust into men's faces, they could pierce hide-bound Heathenism, and bring it captive to Christ. But all such efforts have met with signal failure. It may be said that, at the first, *Christianity* came suddenly to the nations, with its message. But it is to be remembered that the Apostles of the holy mission preached, not to ignorant barbarians, but in polished cities, where the Roman Law and the Greek Literature had diffused their influence.

I am saying that the view taken, even of the Pagan systems, should be one of candor and consideration, rather than the prejudiced and proscriptive one, that usually is taken. But, yet more true, of course, is this, of the Christian systems and sects. Nay, I believe, that every Christian sect has something right in its system; and yet more, something right at heart, even the intent to be right. But in every *system*, I say, there is some good principle, some valuable element, that attaches to it its adherents. The orderly decorum of the Church of England service, the good and fit opening exhortation; (in the beginning of every religious service I always want to say something like *that:*) the cheerful and solemn chantings, the prayers, and the Litany, for the most part, but especially those lovely Collects; the Readings and Responses, the part which the Congregation takes in the audible worship; but then, on the other hand, and the farthest extreme from that, the freedom, for the outpourings of feeling, of the Methodist worship, the social and affectionate character of the Methodist usages and teachings, the heart-warmth that beats through all the irregularities of Love-feasts and Camp-meetings; then, the austerity of Calvinism, whether Presbyterian, Congregational or Baptist, and especially as it determines upon the *life*, to make it, what it *is*, a strict and perilous trial-

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time for all mortal men; and again, the more rational and liberal tenor of the Arminian, Unitarian and Universalist faith; and the fine humanity and spiritualism of the mystic, Swedenborg; and the simple intuitive reliance and brotherly charity of the Friends; and, standing over all, in its claims, the Roman Catholic Church, setting up Religion, in absolute sovereignty over the world, though wrongly placing it in one, fallible, human hand — each and all of these systems and Churches, I say, have something in them to win our respect and sympathy. I stretch out my hands in charity and accord, to the main intent of them all. I have an eclectic principle that enables me to separate the good, from what I think to be the evil, in every one of them.

I am sensible that this is not the attitude usually taken towards the religions of the world. It is condemnation that is commonly dealt out by each one, to all the rest. And if religion were solely a matter of controversy, this doubtless would be the honest standpoint: each one, of course, must think its own way the best. But why *should* it be solely a matter of controversy? Why should not the deep interest at stake, the difficulty and darkness that surround it, and the claimed sincerity of all, make it a subject of profound and even affectionate sympathy? Why should a man, when he sees his neighbor going to Church, say in his mind, "*he* is going to *another* Church!" — a formal Episcopal Church, or a grim Presbyterian, or a heretic Unitarian?" Or when he looks over to the other side of the world, and thinks of the Brahmin or the Buddhist resorting to his temple, why should he regard only with aversion or scorn, the poor Pagan worshipper? This weary and burdened humanity, sin-stricken and saddened with its errings, seeking for help; this

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bewildered and blinded nature, penetrated with the great idea of God, and seeking — to use the touching words of Paul — "seeking, if haply it may feel after him and find him;" these brother-souls *around* us, gathering together for worship, for prayer, drawn by private griefs and strugglings which none but God only knows — drawn from homes, where trial and sorrow and bereavement are, and where death shall soon be; what can win us to tenderness and sympathy if not this!

But if any of those who thus go to worship the Infinite One, and to seek favor and blessing from heaven, take upon them to say, "we only are in the right; ours is the only plan of salvation;" if any sectarian, rending the seamless robe of Christ, while snatching at the whole of it, to cover himself alone, — if any sectarian shall say, that *his* is the only *Church*, and all others but heretic meetings, I am tempted to answer, "good sir, content yourself; you have not this matter to decide upon: there is a larger thought than yours, which takes you in also; have more comfort in religion, and a little less assurance; hast thou faith? have it to thyself before God. Happy is he that condemneth not himself, in that thing which he alloweth." For why — as St. Paul also says — "why dost thou judge thy brother? or why dost thou set at nought thy brother? for we shall all stand before the Judgment-seat of Christ."

IV. Having thus spoken of religion in its root and growth and branches, it remains to consider, in the fourth place, what it *is*, as fruit to feed and strengthen the soul: what are its cardinal truths and indispensable duties. From all questions about creeds and churches, and sects, we naturally appeal, as the prophet did, to what is simple and certain in religion: "he hath showed thee O man, what is good. And what doth

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the Lord require of thee, but to do justly, and to love mercy, and to walk humbly with thy God?"

There are two theories or ways of thinking about religion; the theory of nonchalance, of indifference, and the theory of true and profound interest in it. There is a theory of nonchalance; and it is the ground taken by more persons, I suspect, than we may imagine. There are many who say—"religion is something that we cannot understand, and with which we do not concern ourselves. The wise differ about it, the learned dispute, the sects are all at variance: lo! here, lo! there, they say: and amidst the confusion, we find nothing better than to retire and stand aloof. Besides, we do not see any relation that the matter has to our real happiness. The Teachers tell us that it *will* have; but we cannot be driven into any thing by our selfish fears. We had rather be indifferent than superstitious. And the Church, though it calls, does not win us. It appears to be a body of initiated persons; they profess to have some peculiar experience, from which we are excluded as the profane world; and what can we do but stand apart in utter indifference?"

If this nonchalance stopped at forms, or even at creeds, at abstruse speculations, I could understand it. But if it extends to the great reality lying beneath all, then I must stand clear from it, in absolute wonder at its position. I cannot speak for others; but for myself, I should think myself an idiot, if I did not take the profoundest interest in religion. The lenity with which I have spoken of other forms of faith, does not make me any less a believer in my own. I am a believer in Christianity; of course, if I were not, I should not stand in this pulpit; but I am moreover, a believer in a particular interpretation of Christianity—not as accepting every thing that comes under its name, but

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as holding that construction of the Great Religion, in preference to any other.

I believe in one God. I believe in the Father, the one God; and I believe in the Son; and I believe in the Holy Ghost: not that these three are one, but that these three expressions stand for great and precious and fundamental statements of the Christian faith. What is meant by the first two, is obvious and does not here require explanation; but I believe in the Holy Ghost; i.e. in a divine power, spiritually working in the world, and in all the hearts of men.

I believe also in man; not in his perfection, but that his imperfection implies that there is something undeveloped, unfinished in him, and that he is capable of advancing towards perfection. Animals are perfect in their kind: the bird cannot be more perfect than it is; there is nothing undeveloped in it; and it has no idea of going beyond. It is not so with man. I believe in man; in his conscience, in his moral freedom, and in his power to do right; and that he *does* something right: that he is neither naturally nor altogether wrong. This faith in man is instinctive: and it is remarkable to see, notwithstanding all the deception and wrong we meet with, how naturally we all believe in what our neighbor says or promises to us. A thousand times perhaps, we are deceived; and still we go on believing. This shows that to *ourselves* it is not natural to lie; and he who always acts as if he were going to be taken in, is denaturalized, if not worse.

I believe in goodness. I believe in the goodness of many around me; but I mean now, that I believe in absolute goodness — in its reality, its preciousness, its infinite preciousness. I believe in nothing else as I believe in that. I believe that pure love — pure, unselfish, uncalculating, unstinted love, is the chief good,

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the only essential good, the infinite and eternal good; that it is blessing, beatitude, blessedness — the blessedness of the Infinite Being, and of all his rational creatures.

I am saying these things in the way of statement, rather than reasoning. I am speaking as it were in apothegms; let me go on to do so, in a few more words, and thus to express freely my thoughts of the best and highest things; for these are my religion.

We all believe in prayer in some sense; it is distinctively, the great thing in religion. But the best of all prayers is that which rises spontaneously in the heart, in the silent walk, in the still chamber, or it may be, in the busy throng of life — the thanksgiving that rises like incense, the devotion unbidden, the absorption into God, which says, "I have all in Thee; I want nothing: do with me what Thou wilt, now in time and hereafter in eternity: I am happy, I am full of joy; having all in Thee, I desire nothing beside."

And yet because we are liable to forget God, and we want to live our instant and perpetual life in Him, it is meet that we have some distinct time or times, every day, for this recollection and communion. And besides, there must be something of method in our deepest studies and most earnest pursuits, that we may grow and gain success in them.

But nevertheless, since prayer is so great an action, that the mind sometimes shrinks from it, in its weakness and weariness, and because all enforced formality is liable to be irksome, it is also meet and best, that we should resort to our secret devotions, in great freedom, as to the manner or order — almost without order, and with no precise method; walking or sitting or kneeling, as is most natural to the mind's mood at the time: let there be meditations, or self-communings, or

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the thoughts that may freely arise — thoughts of our duties or failures, or of Providence, or of the Infinite Goodness; just to rest for the time, in the all-embosoming sense of things divine. Prayer should not be all hard and strenuous supplication; but sometimes reasonings of the heart with itself, or expansions of the soul into the infinite realm of light and life. Thus spoke to me and in this wise, a sage and venerable teacher in theology, to whom I once resorted to commune with him upon the troubles of my mind in this very thing; and he told me that he commonly went for his daily devotions to walk in a grove near his house. Let no one speak of this daily resort, as "going to say his prayers:" the very phrase is an offence; but let him say — it is going to God, going to find the infinite resource and treasure and felicity. Wisdom, beauty, glory, beneficence so wonderful, all around us, and appealing to us through every wonderful sense and faculty; who that has a rational soul, must not pause, from time to time, to think of it?

Devotion is subject to some new and unusual trials, under the light of modern science. Millions of creatures in a drop of water, millions of glorious orbs rolling through seemingly unbounded space, and all these, it may be, but a portion of the works of God, — our minds stagger under the stupendous conception of such a Being, and our thoughts are liable to sink into vagueness and obscurity, if not incredulity and scepticism. But God is: some Cause there must be for all these wonders: and that Cause must be good. My mind sinking into whatever awful questions it may, settles firmly upon that. My nature in every faculty proclaims an Infinite Goodness. And such beneficent adaptations to every sense and power in me; gratification for taste and smell and touch, visions of beauty

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for the eye, music for the ear, truth for the mind, sanctity and love for the soul: what *can* manifest goodness, if all this does not? My whole being is one living embodiment of manifestation; and I should be guilty of denial and treason to my very nature, if I were not a religious, reverent and grateful creature of the God who made me.

But religion is not all devoutness: piety is the first commandment; but virtue is like it — equally requisite. Religion is not spirituality alone, as men construe that word: it is right living, fair dealing, in act and word and thought, honest buying and selling: it is speaking the truth, and speaking it in love; never causelessly to hurt or harm any one, never calling any man, but with great pain, a bad man: it is friendliness and forbearance and a loving heart: it is self-control, self-denial, self-sacrifice, when occasion calls.

How must a man be girded with strength, to do, and to *be*, all this! And yet what weakness in all mortal hearts! What exposures to selfishness and impatience and passion and appetite, and a thousand wily temptations! There must be watching and praying, and resolving, and the strong *will*. "Be strong," said the angel to Daniel, "yea, be strong." "More power is shown," said Starr King, "in silently treading a passion (like ambition) under foot, and thus being unknown, than when it blazes forth, and makes a great fame." And here we stand in these mortal lists, in this battle of life, to fight with courage and win the day; or to succumb and sink in cowardice and shame and miserable defeat.

The fight goes hard indeed, with the very condition of our being; with what we *are*, and the state in which we are. That we should be so weak, and yet have such a work to do; that such tremendous issues should hang

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upon our feeble will — happiness or misery, such as we are capable of, health or disease, glory or shame: and then, that we are environed, beset with such difficulties; that such clouds should be spread over all the scene, and that such awful things should be going on beneath them — wars, and famines, and pestilences and earthquakes; and yet that this should be God's world; God's wisdom in it, God's infinite love brooding over it; I believe it; I have worked my way out through days and years of reasoning, and I stand firm and calm in that faith. But great is that faith; all the powers of our being, spiritual and intellectual, are gathered up in that action; well does an Apostle say, "And this is the victory, even our faith."

God has surrounded our being with mysteries: and he has given us that faith to conquer by — that one staff to walk by. Quit that, and all is wandering and stumbling, in chaos, in utter darkness. To all questions about religion — root, growth, branches, systems of religion — sects, churches, rites, forms, philosophies; this is the answer, "he hath showed thee O man, what is good: and what doth the Lord require of thee, but to do justly, to love mercy, and to walk humbly with thy God?"

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VI.

THE SYMBOL AND THE REALITY.

Ps. xxxix. 6. — "Surely every man walketh in a vain show."

THERE is a failure to apprehend the reality in life. There is, amidst its boundless activity and engrossing earnestness, a failure to grasp the real and vital thing that most concerns us — to which I wish to invite your thoughts in this morning's meditation. There are many men, if I do not misjudge the tenor of their lives, who are "walking in a vain show." They do not penetrate beneath the surface to the inmost meaning of their life. There is something in life which they have never reached; an interest, a charm, a glory in life which they have never perceived. They are dealing with forms and with facts, and that is unavoidable; but they do not go beyond, as they ought, to the meaning of the forms, to the philosophy of the facts. Animals live, we supppose, without *any* of this deeper, this ulterior consideration of things, and in this respect the life of most men is too much an animal life.

Let me state the point with a little more formality. We are wont to say, that the universe, the world, life, all that exists in short, is composed of two parts, the visible and the invisible; and further that the visible reveals the invisible. Thus it is said in Scripture, that the invisible things of God are known by the things that are made, even his eternal power and God-

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head. The visible things then are symbols. They are not the great realities, but symbols of those realities. The visible human form for instance, is but a symbol of the reality, the spirit within. And all its visible action, occupation, toil, change; all sickness, health, fulness, want, pursuit, attainment, the whole busy round of life is symbolical; it means something else than appears. The world itself is a symbol. The universe is a symbol. Now what I say is, that most men stop at the symbol, at the outside appearance, and do not go to the reality that is shadowed forth by it.

Let your thoughts carry this into detail a moment, and see if it is not true. A man is engaged in a profession, or occupied with business, or with toil. How seldom does he go beneath the visible fact, to the deeper meaning of all this! The affairs of life are machinery to most men; the deeper philosophy of things, is out of their sight. This whole sphere of things called business is meant for culture; who thinks of it as culture?

Again, a man is sick. Now there was no need in the nature of things, *i.e.*, in his material nature, that he should be sick. In that he has a body, there was no need of it. Animals seldom suffer under this corrective discipline. Will it be said that man is endowed with a more delicate physical organization, and that is the reason? Very well; that carries us back a step farther. Why has he this more delicate organization? For the culture of the soul. It tends to accomplish that end; why then should we not say, that was its design? The sickness of the body then, is part of a system of moral development and advancement. Often it is the very consequence and corrective of moral evil. Always it calls for moral strength. And yet it is very

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possible to pass through a severe illness, the most monitory fact in life, penetrative and piercing almost as conscience itself, without any thought of the deeper meaning of the dispensation. It is not merely a want of religion of which I speak; it is a want of general insight into the meaning of things. We walk "in a vain show." The word rendered show, means an image, a shadow. And it is amidst shadows that we live. We live, and know not *what it is* to live. We suffer, but know not wherefore; we rejoice, but to no lofty end. We are high or low, rich or poor, without knowing the meanings of greatness or humbleness, or the real and ultimate ends of wealth or poverty. Our life, it is to be observed, is necessarily a visible action, a series of events, a succession of sensitive pleasures and pains, a train of physical causes and effects. The question is, to what deeper design and discipline does all this point? And with this question, I think, but few minds are habitually conversant. In a crowd of cares, in the throng of society, in the whirl of alternate occupation and pleasure, most men pass their lives; and too often, amidst it all, there is no large philosophy, no deep meditation, no genuine spirituality, and no effectual faith.

The Symbol and the Reality, then — let this be the theme of our present meditation. I have spoken of the general failure to apprehend the reality. Let us first consider some of the causes of this defect, and next the remedy for it.

I. The first cause is found in the necessary preponderance, at the earliest periods of life, of the physical over the spiritual man. This consideration is so obvious that I need not dwell upon it. Our childhood is nourished, supported, educated by the visible, by symbols; and is not to be required immediately to

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enter into the deeper and more recondite meanings of things. A child must be expected, in the round of his pleasures and studies, often to tread unconsciously on the hidden springs of wisdom and mystery. More than is usual indeed, they should be laid open to him. Thus for instance, I have often known a child of eight and ten years old, earnestly to inquire, why it must learn, why its studies must be so hard, why it may not neglect the harder tasks, and sport away its days in ease and pleasure. This may be an occasion I think, for explaining something of God's great discipline in human life, for showing, that tasks are given to develop energies, and trials to nurture submission and patience. The child may be told that if his mind were not put to task, he would always be a child; he would never grow up to be a man.

If more of this nature were taught, if especially the youth who is going through the rounds of professional, mercantile, or mechanical apprenticeship, were instructed more than he is, in the principles of things, were taught to reason and reflect, he would be saved, in part, from the operation of the second cause I was about to mention, and that is routine.

Routine, I say, receives the pupil of technical education and sends him in the mill-horse round of life, no wiser to-day than he was yesterday, no wiser at forty than he was at twenty. Some added skill he acquires in performing his daily tasks, but no added wisdom, it may be, in regard to their ultimate design and meaning. Thus the care of the house, the care of the farm, the care of the manufactory, the warehouse, the office, instead of becoming a field of expansive improvement, becomes a mechanism to lock up the faculties in barren sterility. The busy action of life frustrates its very intent. This, I say, is the effect of routine. If the

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things we do every day were done but once in life, they would arrest the mind and awaken reflection. But this constant repetition of every day's task, makes the whole formal and factitious. Life is bereft of vitality. The action lacks the interpreting thought. We cease to know why we act — almost why we live.

This effect, again, is increased by the pressure of occupation. So much to do, leaves us little time to think. If we solemnly set apart a season each day for meditation and prayer, this tendency of business to sink the spiritual nature out of sight, may be happily controlled. But on the contrary, a man who rises in the morning with only time to make his toilet and hurry to his morning meal, who then hastens to his business, and then back again to his dinner, and afterwards perhaps to business or to business studies again, and finally sinks to stupor by his fireside or rushes into society — this man, I say, is likely to go blind and stumbling through all the moral emergencies of his being, through the infinite of things that surrounds him, and to know nothing, nothing of himself, nothing of God, nothing of the grandeur of his existence, nothing of all those sublime teachings that are breathed alike from the stars above him and from every wayside around him.

And now, in fine, when education, and routine, and occupation, have conducted a man to the point towards which most men are pressing — that is to say, to the possession of property, to wealth — what is the effect of this condition? Still more, I fear, to protect and to shield him, so to speak, from the naked realities of life. Oh! the way in which a man knows life, who takes it shivering and shelterless under the storms of disaster and sorrow — how different is it likely to be, from that knowledge which comes through folding cur-

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tains and soft raiment! On this account, I have come to look with considerable distrust, I confess, upon prosperous fortunes; to doubt whether they are not often made pillows to keep men from the closest contact with the great spiritual realities of life. They make men independent in more respects than is apt to be well for them; independent of exertion, independent of the ordinary restraints of life, and of its plain and homely needs and trials; independent of one another. For an illustration of this last point, though it is not very applicable to *our* state of society, observe the effect of wealth upon the conjugal relation, in the opulent families of Europe. If a difficulty arises, the parties can separate, live apart, keep separate establishments; that is to say, they can evade the moral emergency that has arisen. In more moderate circumstances, they would be obliged to meet it, to compose the difference, to learn patience and forbearance.

Thus again, to take an instance that may occur anywhere—a young person nursed in luxury, has fallen into a reckless depression from some cause or other; she is disturbed and made almost sick by some cross to pride or passion; in short, she is in the condition of the spoiled child that needs correction: and now the friend, the mother, the care-taker says, "Let us surprise her with some unexpected pleasure, or let us take her a journey, or have company, or some excursion, or some recreation." In short, something is devised to ward off the question, the emergency that was designed to call out the energy, subdue the will, discipline the nature. In moderate circumstances probably, this emergency must have been fairly met. With the easements of more prosperous condition, it is escaped.

Indeed, what else, with many, is the pursuit of pleas-

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ure, what else are the resorts of luxury, the indulgences of pampered sense, but escape. They bring no satisfaction; but they have an indirect use; and this it is—to provide escape from the inward need, to divert the soul's craving from itself, to pour the slaking draught over the burning spot within, and thus to soothe the irritation for the time.

Of course I do not deny that wealth may provide a beautiful ministration for sickness, for sick nerves, and saddened spirits. Only let the case for relief be subjected to any fine moral discrimination, and all is well. But this constant indulgence which wealth is apt to bring with it; this perpetual softening of the lot, plastering of the sore, helping with opiates and stimulants; how different it is from the wise discipline of Providence! With a rough hand, it shakes the indolent and the self-indulgent, ay, the rough hand of disease and pain. With ingredients distilled in our very souls and by the very fire of our passions, it imbitters every cup of pride, every sweet that selfishness tastes. With the heavy and the strong bonds of experience, it brings and compels a man to stand before it, as before the master, to receive the lesson.

And that the true end and interest of life is that we should learn the lesson; that all the visible pursuits and possessions of life, all its fortunes and vicissitudes, have an ulterior purpose and one that centres in the soul; that the soul and the soul's interest are the great realities which interpret all forms, all modes of things, all events on earth; that God made us all for ends high and solemn and everlasting as spiritual natures are high and everlasting; that he did not send us into this world to be the sport of a thousand accidents, but through all to work out a great salvation; and therefore, that the true wisdom of life, is that, in all things

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and in all situations, alone or in a crowd, at home or on a journey, laboring or reposing, gaining or losing, rejoicing or sorrowing, we should ever be conversant with this deep and hidden reality; all this, I suppose is as evident to any moderate degree of reflection, as it is undoubtedly recognized in our Christian faith.

II. I have attempted to expose the danger — from education, from routine, from occupation and from acquisition — of losing sight of this reality. Let me now, in the next place, say something on the means to be used and the dispositions to be cultivated, in resistance to this tendency of so many things to keep us on the surface.

The first is philosophy, the philosophy of life. Be not alarmed my brethren, as if I were now going quite on to heathen ground in my teachings; I say philosophy. There is little danger of its doing any harm; for few persons enough, are likely to know any thing about it. What I recommend is, some mental task; enough reading, enough reflection, enough listening to the pulpit, if that really teaches us, to establish in our minds some general view and theory of life as a whole; of its real end, and of the way in which its visible action ministers to that end. There is a sad want of books on the subject, especially in our own language; for Germany and France have been much more fruitful in this kind of disquisition. But still I would advise the reading of what there is among us. Or at least, if one has time for nothing else let him read George Combe's Book on the Constitution of Man. He will find himself assisted in one department of the philosophy of life; that of the human system. He will find that beneath its fleshly coverings and its obvious passions, lie hidden many spiritual meanings. If all nature and all life were thus disclosed to us, if all the

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processes and relations of human and earthly things were thus interpreted; what an unveiling would that be! — how would the dead fact on every side take a soul, and the dumb event speak out, and the barren forms of things would be clothed with living expression! We should then commune with the interior soul of life; because all events would be a language discoursing evermore of that very thing. The heavens and the earth would be written over with that language, and the whole of life would be a converse, more or less directly, with that hidden wisdom.

In the next place, I would say that some particular time must be taken for this kind of study and effort; and especially for the practical, or if I may say so, the executive part of it. To meditate daily, to pray daily, seems a means indispensable for breaking this surface crust of formality, habit, routine, which hides the living springs of wisdom. To counteract the tendency of engrossing business or care, and especially of luxurious condition or of the ambition to be great in the world, there seems necessary from time to time, a strong impression of the unseen realities of our being. This impression, by the very laws of the mind, is to be gained only by fixed attention, and this serious and devoted attention is the very meditation and prayer that I recommend.

I will not enlarge here upon the obvious importance of this daily, this deeper thought, but I cannot help observing that there is a superstitious feeling about its importance, which is likely to prove an obstacle, in some minds, to the just and reasonable consideration of it. The feeling nakedly stated is this; "it cannot be that I am a Christian, if I do not pray daily" — *i.e.* in form and manner. Now whatever may be true upon this point, I should not wish any person

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to be dragged to the service by this kind of force put upon his conscience, or to speak more justly, upon his fears. Look upon it rather, I should say, not as if it were this technical condition, not even as if it were any religious action at all. Ask yourself the simple question; whether in a confused mass of events such as make up our lives, some regulating thought is not necessary; amidst superficial forms and overspreading disguises, some deeper searching; amidst the swaying and misleading senses, some penetrating meditation. Ask whether, when every thing is carrying the mind out of itself, some daily self-communion, sinking to the depths within, and whether, amidst the loud bustle of hurrying life, some daily and solemn pause, some deeper silence in the soul, be not good and wise. One such quiet and silent hour, some solemn moments even, would at times strip off many of the illusions of sense and of the world, that slowly wind themselves about us, and would unveil to us the great and eternal realities of our being. One gaze at the stars, in the solemn silence of night, is often enough to break up some spell of worldly vanity or trouble. But from deeper meditation, how often would a man come forth, with a freer step and a more fearless spirit — a being loftier and more independent, stronger to meet temptation and to bear calamity; and why? Because he had calmly looked into the regions of the spirit's life, to which all this outward scene doth minister; because his thoughts had visited a world — not far off, but near him, *in* him — a world of blessed affections and hopes, far beyond the reach of this world's change and disaster and grandeur; because he had learned for once to say, "my conscience, my soul, is myself, my all; and whatever else belongs to me — rags of beggary or plated gold of fortune, garment of humble toil or

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gilded crown of honor — is but the perishable ministration of an hour; because, I say once more, he had stood some moments, on the threshold of heaven, and looking out from this darkened archway of time, upon the everlasting inheritance, had said, "come, thou immortal life! I am swallowed up in thee!"

I might dwell upon other means for obtaining this insight that penetrates beneath the surface of life, and especially upon a deeper reading of the Gospel — of the wonderful story of him whose life was all reality, whose every act and thought seemed to touch the springs of unseen power, whose great reliance was upon a world unseen, who never for a moment lost, amidst the visible, the sense of the invisible; and who spake evermore of things unseen, of the soul's hidden resource, and of the presence of God, as if they were as manifest as the open shows of life. I might dwell upon all this, but the consideration is obvious; it is sufficient to commend it to your attention; and I will pray you rather to turn your thoughts a moment in close, to the vital importance of the thing itself.

It must be a sad failure, by itself considered, without any reference to consequences; it must be a terrible oversight; it must be an irreparable loss, to pass through life, ignorant or unconscious of those grand realities, that impart to it, all its interest, charm and majesty. If all visible things are but symbols of sublimer truths that lie imbosomed in them, if all palpable events are but shadows, or at most but bodies that have a soul, if beneath all the splendor and beauty of nature and of existence, there is an all-disposing thought and wisdom; not to recognize it, is surely one of the most pitiable mental defaults. It is a thousand-fold more unfortunate than to be ignorant of all

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languages, of all technical sciences, of all that the world calls wisdom. To be blind in a land of beauty, to be deaf in a land of music — these would be but figures to set forth that greater deprivation. What would you think of a man who looked upon some great and heroic action, that shone out from the flame of martyrdom or before the lowering front of battle, and saw it only as a mere visible thing, — saw nothing of the heroic soul behind, that thus flashed out in the brave symbolic deed? Could you express your sense of that man's misfortune or moral stupidity? Yet there are some who approach that degree of blindness. If you take note of men's conversation you will often find those who stop at the visible fact. Nay, there are men whose baseness utterly debars them from *ever* seeing a martyr's soul, from ever seeing a great and heroic action. But such, in regard to the whole action and scene of life, are all superficial worldlings; who live in and for the visible alone; alike without philosophy, without meditation, and without the deep-searching wisdom of the Gospel. No matter in what guise or goodly show they walk through this life, surrounded with what splendors of fortune or wrapped about with what robes of fashion, or lauded howsoever much as the great and wise of this world; they are poor and miserable and blind and naked and destitute, and the life they are living is a poor and paltry life.

Such is the want of insight in itself; without any regard to consequences. But now, I say, in the next place, that it has consequences. For the want of this insight, is the want of faith, the want of deep-founded principle, the want of a great strong thought to live by. *My* view of life at least, is this; that no man, amidst its swaying passions and sweeping tides, can stand firm and steady, unless he plants his foot in an invisible world.

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It is not a small thing, it is not the most common thing — the instances of failure are many — to walk through this life in simple, quiet, erect dignity and ease, leaning neither one way nor the other too much, neither strutting nor crouching, nor too stiff nor too pliant, nor fidgeting, nor too self-conscious, nor thinking too much of one's self any way; but rather as if occupied with a thought deeper than the visible scene, or with a purpose that carries a man out of his visible personality and clear of others at the same time, and makes him a truly independent and respectable being. The man who is leaning upon the visible, shifting and wavering objects of this world, cannot be such a man. I have often marked in my daily walk, such votaries and victims of visible condition — some of whom were bent and bowed in demeanor, all acquiescence and submission; *their* whole manner said, "my life is dependence on others;" others with assumption and hauteur in every step; *their* manner as plainly saying, "I have wealth, or I have reputation, or I have a position that bids the world stand, and mark me." Yet these were as far as the other from the erect and easy posture, of him who lives in thoughts and not in things, in realities and not in forms.

If you say that all this relates to mere manner, it is still true; but it does *not* relate to mere manner; it points to a deeper principle. That principle is, that the stronghold of a man's virtue, calmness, dignity, welfare, is in the unseen world — the world of faith and trust, the world of sentiments, reflections, motives, thoughts, that go beyond the visible scene.

That world of conscience and of God's presence — how does it trouble us, rather than guide and sustain us! We are not faithful to our deeper convictions — to those convictions that spring from the unseen life

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within us, and that point to the unseen Life that reigns all around us. We do not let *them* mould and fashion our life for us. Then would the inward power go forth and beautify the whole creation amidst which we live. Then would the inmost peace spread peace and gladness all around us. But now the visitations from that inner world, repressed and hindered from their rightful office, come forth in flashes of rebuke, or in low mutterings of displeasure, that fill us with alarm.

Alas! it will never do. The world within must fashion the world without, or it will never be a happy world to us. I know not how it may be with the men of milder climes and more facile natures; for I have marked them as they seemed to sport or dream away their lives; but for you, men of the northern clime, men of the Saxon blood, men of deeper sentiments and deeper necessities, I tell you that a life of sense, of form, fashion and worldliness, will never do. Forever is there a consciousness hanging about you, haunting your paths, struggling in your deepest bosoms, that demands something better. Upward you must go towards heaven, or downward you must sink towards hell — discontent, intemperance perhaps, certain misery in that path; for you cannot contentedly toil away *your* life in labor-fields, or sport away your life on the bright plains. But let the inner feeling, the inner purpose fashion your outward life; and for the worldling's world which you so resign, they shall give you back another world, brighter than passion ever found, or worldly dreams of fancy ever imagined. Like the heavens which spread themselves in tenfold sublimity and beauty before the eye kindling with the light of astronomic lore, so shall the world go forth before you. All things shall be great, all things shall be good, all things blessed, for you who see their purpose and min-

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istration, for you who have carried a great and wise philosophy and a high and adoring faith into them. Ye shall not say, in common and cant phrase, "what poor things are possessions and honors, or what indifferent things are poverty and toil!" but rather, "what great things are they all in their meaning and intent!" So shall your spirit getting rid of galling discontent and mean envy, walk abroad in freedom and gladness, take the broad pathway of generous love and soaring faith, till you enter that world, where the hidden things become manifest, and the secret things known, and the now invisible virtue wears the everlasting crown.

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VII.

ON THE LOVE OF GOD, AND OF MAN.

1 JOHN iv. 20. — "He that loveth not his brother whom he hath seen, how can he love God, whom he hath not seen."

THE stress here laid upon social virtue, I wish to speak of, first, in this discourse; and then, in the second place, conceding to religion the highest place, to speak of certain mistaken ideas of the relation of religion to society.

Perhaps I shall best indicate my purpose by saying more distinctly at the outset, what the views are, both of religion and social virtue, which I mean to controvert — of virtue, as something common-place, low, and easy to be attained in comparison with religion, and of religion, the far higher attainment, as necessarily holding a position of antagonism with society, and as unfitting its possessors for playing any fair and welcome part in it.

For the need there is of such a general discussion in the pulpit, I may say, without contradiction, I think, that the social virtues are too little considered in the common teachings of religion. How rare it is, to hear a sermon on social influence, on simple honesty, on truth-telling, or even upon the family ties! All this is usually passed over as mere superficial morality. It is not treated of, as if it had any vital concern with what is specifically called the salvation of men. Many sermons are preached, to awaken men's minds to this great

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concern; and they are awakened to it; but if, in such an hour, when men are asking, "what they shall do to be saved?" the preacher were to select any social duty for his topic, he would be thought to have departed entirely from his proper business. The state of the affections towards God, engrosses his attention. The whole matter of conversion, turns upon that. Something about duties toward men comes in, perhaps, as a consequence; but not as a part of the thing itself. So it has always been. In former days penances and pilgrimages, in latter days prayers and meditations, have usurped almost the whole idea of spiritual rectitude. So it was in ancient times. And with regard to this error, the people were very solemnly admonished. "Bring no more vain oblations; incense is an abomination to me; your new moons and sabbaths and calling of assemblies, I cannot away with. And when ye spread forth your hands I will hide mine eyes from you; yea, when ye make many prayers, I will not hear you." Why? "Your hands are full of blood." Then comes the exhortation to amendment; and what is it? "Wash you, make you clean; put away the evil of your doings from before mine eyes; cease to do evil; learn to do well; seek judgment, relieve the oppressed, do justice to the fatherless, defend the cause of the widow." This is, throughout, a solemn remonstrance against religiousness and religious observances, in behalf of the social virtues.

Let us now proceed to consider them. What are they? Justice, truth, generosity, candor, pity, gentleness, forbearance, disinterestedness, forgiveness. The bare abstract mention of these qualities, shows that they are of no small account. But I do not mean to dwell upon them as abstractions. To show what they are, and especially, what place they have in a good and

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right life, let me ask two questions. Wherein lies a man's most constant struggle to be right? And what are the sorest temptations that assail him?

In answer to the first question, I say that the great struggle to be and to do right, lies in the social relations. It is in the intercourse of man with man, it is where heart is brought to heart and hand to hand, that the rectitude of the mind is most severely tried. Accordingly, the pressure of our Bible, if not of our pulpit teachings, is mostly upon the conduct of life. Look at any catalogue of Christian virtues in the New Testament, and see how large a proportion of it is social. "The fruits of the Spirit," says Paul to the Galatians, "are love, joy, peace, long-suffering, gentleness, goodness, fidelity, meekness, temperance." Why joy is put into this catalogue, it might puzzle a philosophical generalizer to know: since joy, strictly speaking, is not a virtue. But how does the spirit of the great Apostolic martyr, all whose life was martyrdom, shine out in this perpetual refrain—"joy and rejoicing!" And indeed, joy, upspringing outflowing joy, in a world so full of pain and sorrow, though it possess no distinct character as a virtue, is the flower and crown of all virtues.

But the point on which I am about to insist more particularly is, that the trial and test of every one's character, lies in the social relations. I venerate devotion. It is the loftiest tendency of our nature. It stands first in the Christian order, and is necessary to give the true character to all the social virtues. But after all, it seems to me easier to be devout than to be good. You may be surprised at this declaration, and may impute it to the habits of a mind which, from its situation, is much accustomed to religious contemplation. You may say that the very contrary is true

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in your experience; that it is much easier for you to be good than to be devout. But let us see if this opinion is accordant with the real nature of things. In worship you stand apart from all human competitions; you are alone, you simply lift your eyes, in reverence and delight to the Infinite Goodness and Loveliness, or in prayer to the Infinite Mercy. No envy can intrude, no strife, for there can be no controversy — at least none such as a man hath with his fellow. In your intercourse with man, all this is reversed. He is your competitor; he is imperfect, and you are almost obliged to love him and confide in him by halves; he wrongs you, contradicts your opinion, injures your interest, or slights your person; or if not, you are liable to think this of him; and it is proportionally hard to love him. You may tell me that it is comparatively easy to be amiable; and I will tell you, when it is so. It is when you are cherished and caressed; when you are admired, when fortune and human favor shine upon you. But let strife, rivalship and detraction come; let slight, neglect and rejection come; and where is your amiableness then? I pray God you may keep it in your heart; but I tell you it will be hard to keep it there. And easy might you then find it, to fly from the fiery atmosphere of loud and angry contention to the cool and still retreats of prayer. And well were it that you should fly there — but for strength, not escape from your trial. Ay, and let me still remind you that it may be easier to pray than to practise. It is too likely, indeed, that rushing to that resort with a disturbed and angry mind, you may pray ill; but alas! your doing is likely to be worse than your praying. Many seem to be good men, God-ward, who are not good, man-ward. Many have prayed away their lives in cells and her-

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mitages, who were very little qualified for the severe ordeal of society. And many now are praying for hours every day, who seem very little to understand the delicacy and tenderness of the social relations; who in actual life, are not calm, kind and wise, but passionate, opinionated, self-sufficient, sour and disagreeable.

But I have said, too, that the sorest of a man's temptations are social. It is, indeed but a part of the same thing; but let us look at the matter in this light, a moment. What is it that a man is tempted to do, that is wrong? Almost ever it is something that invades the welfare of his neighbor. It is something hard, cruel, over-reaching, dishonest, unjust; something that despoils another of property, fame or virtue. What are the forms of evil that assail a man's virtue? "Hatred, variance" — so runs the Apostolic catalogue — "emulations, wrath, strife, seditions, schisms, envyings, murders, drunkenness, revellings, and such like."

I do not know but I may seem to be insisting unnecessarily upon a very plain thing; but when so large a part of the teachings of the pulpit, relates to something else than the actual virtues and vices of the social condition, I have thought it important to make so distinct a statement. It *is* necessary at least that it be fairly considered, in order that we may understand the dignity and beauty of the social virtues.

For here it is, amidst the press and throng of human interests and passions; here it is, amidst the waves of public opinion and the eddyings of private interference, that social virtue is to stand firm and true. I know that its greatest charm is commonly represented as consisting in what is technically called philanthropy, in visiting the sick, the poor and destitute, or in relieving the blind, the deaf, the insane, the forsaken or the op-

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pressed. These are, indeed, lofty forms of virtue, and I praise them; they are a part of that which I wish to hold up to your admiration. But there is another sphere, little considered, still more trying, still more lofty, where the philanthropist often fails, and the man of boundless charities is often wanting. It is the great fellowship of society, where you sit in your own dwelling, in the neighborhood of surrounding families; it is the college or the school, where you have competitors; it is the gay throng of society, where you are sought or slighted. There it is, that personal beauty often despoils the heart of all its beauty; there it is that flattery bereaves the mind of all its simplicity and modesty, or neglect of all its candor and kindliness; there it is that envious passions so distort the soul, that only concealment makes social life endurable. Yes, the great atmosphere of society breathes upon us; and heat and cold are not keener visitations. Nay, neither sword nor scymitar more sharply pierces the heart, than the every day passions of human society.

Courteous manners help us; and when they come from the mind and heart, they show like flowers in a cultured garden. How superior is this, to the ordinary cultivation of the arts! A person of real courtesy forgetful of himself, of real delicacy considerate of others, a person of sense and tact, simple and sincere in manners and speech, true to himself and others — how superior is he to one who is merely accomplished in music, painting, or the speaking of languages! The one has cultivated his whole being; the other only a special art or faculty.

Nor is the true social culture limited to any distinction of worldly state or fortune. It may be found in any of our abodes, and the humblest of them, as truly as in the palaces of kings. The same bond of social

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duty presses upon all. To make the comparison more specific; the king has a house and household — fellow-men, friends, kindred with whom he comes into various contact; so have I. The king has business, has affairs to manage, questions to settle; so have I. The monarch has affections to cultivate, passions to control, temptations to withstand; so have I. Now suppose that I, a merchant, lawyer, physician, clergyman, or any man of human, household, business cares and affairs, have as much as I can do to meet the moral exigencies of my situation. The monarch can do no more. He does what he can. He could do no more, though he had a world for his kingdom. His moral power is not to be measured by the extent of his dominion. Every man has realm enough for all his moral energy, in the daily sphere of his life.

And what I have now been saying, is that this life of social relations, presents us with some of the loftiest trials and some of the noblest forms of human virtue; and that it is in the collisions of social life, that the jewel of virtue receives its brightest polish.

And let me add, that upon many a lowly bosom that gem shines, more bright and beautiful than it is ever likely to shine in any court of royalty or crown of empire; and this for the very reason that it shines in loneliness and obscurity, and is surrounded with no circlet of gazing and flattering eyes. There *are* positions in life, in society, where all loveliness is seen and noted, chronicled in men's admiring comments, and perhaps celebrated in adulatory sonnets and songs. And well, perhaps, that it is so. I would not repress the admiration of society towards the lovely and good. But there is many a lowly cottage, many a lonely bedside of sickness and pain, to which genius brings no offering, to which the footsteps of the enthusiastic

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never come; to which there is *no* cheering visitation—but the visitation of angels. *There* is humble toil—*there* is patient assiduity—*there* is noble disinterestedness—*there* is unwearied patience and heroic sacrifice. The great world passes by, and it toils on in silence; to its gentle footsteps there are no echoing praises; around its modest beauty gathers no circle of admirers. It never thought of honor, it never asked to be known. Unsung, unrecorded is the labor of its life, and shall be, till the heavens are no more, till the great promise of Christ is fulfilled, till the last shall be first, till the lowliest shall be loftiest; and the poverty of this world shall be the riches and glory of heaven.

I have thus spoken of the value and greatness of social virtue. I have now only space left me, in the second place, to say a few words on the relation which religion should have to society. In a certain school of religious thought, it is regarded as a relation of antagonism; but I maintain that it should be a relation of amity; in other words that it should recognize the social virtues; nay more, that a true religion should be lovely in the eyes of society.

"What!" some will say, "do you mean to aver that holiness, conformity to God's law, discipleship to Jesus, the feelings of the regenerate soul, are attractive to surrounding society? Do you mean to say that the wicked world will love this character, or that one's own unregenerate relations will love it? Will darkness love light, or evil good? Is not the friendship of this world, declared to be enmity with God? And will it not, therefore, be enmity with God's people? Can I expect to be loved, because I am a Christian? Am I not disliked and shunned for that very cause? Has godliness, forsooth, become a precious thing in the world? Do I find it so? Does not, on the contrary,

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my very philanthropy, my compassion for souls, draw upon me their contempt and anger? Are not these the most marked badges of my faithful discipleship? Well might I tremble for myself, if the world were pleased with me. Ah! ye accommodating, time-serving, praise-loving Christians! the world may like you and your religion; but let me rather, with all the faithful, bear the burden of reproach and obloquy."

Here is a mass of errors, which could be disentangled, if I had time for it. But it will be sufficient for you, I think, if I simply turn your attention to them.

The first is an error of interpretation. The early Christian teachers and their converts stood before the world as reformers. They condemned both the religion and morals of surrounding society. Therefore that society hated them. The friendship of such a world, would have been enmity with God. Jesus himself once said to his disciples, "the world cannot hate you, but me it hateth." Why? "Because I testify of it, that the works thereof are evil." That is, because I stand before it, as a teacher, a censor, and reformer. Ye do not; and therefore, ye are not yet hated.

The second is an error of theology. The mass of mankind, theology says, are totally depraved. It follows as an *inference* that they will perfectly hate all good men. It follows as an *inference* that the body of society, consisting mostly of unregenerate persons, will hate all the best people they know — that is, as the theology assumes, all Christian people; that true Christians cannot be lovely in their eyes. But I leave you to conclude, as you must, from all human experience, that the inference upsets the theory.

The third error lies deeper, and consists in the mistake of what it *is*, to be a Christian. A man claiming

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to be such, may say, "I am not beloved; I am not a favorite with society; nay, I am disliked for my religion: that is my chief offence; if I could settle down into the common track, I should do very well." If such an objector were here to listen to my reply, I suppose it would surprise him; for I really think, that his very case may confirm my principle. The dislike of him may by no means be a dislike of true religious goodness. The *assumption* that he is very religious, that he is better than others, *that* certainly is neither religion nor goodness. It is not the natural form or dress of religion or goodness; it wears quite a different aspect. Only suppose a few persons to claim that they have all the knowledge in the world; would the dislike of them be the dislike of knowledge?

Oh! sirs, I would say, what if you should be a little more modest and tolerant! What if you should think a little less, how much other men want religion, and a little more, how much you want it yourself! What if you should bow down, in an unfeigned humility, that could not take on this arrogance of piety — which becomes no human creature? I do not believe that you would have any less religion, though men would love you more. Human love — the dearest earthly boon; why should it not be given to religion and religious men? Why should not he be the *best* Christian, whom men love most? I believe it should be so. I plead this claim of religion. The evil that is done by severing it from all kindliness and genialness, from all social attraction, is incalculable, and almost irreparable. Alas! grounded in the very heart of society, is the notion, that religion is essentially disagreeable. It is a monstrous and fatal error. My friends, I repudiate, I reject the idea. I reject it with indignation. I do not believe in the disagreeableness of religion. I have no faith in the excellence of disagreeable people.

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Let me not be misunderstood. Religion in the soul, that profound reverence and love for the Infinite Perfection, must and should be precious and priceless with its possessor. And I respect the feelings of the man who conscious of the treasure, the joy which he has in his own religious affections, is earnestly desirous of winning others to share them. The only question is about the manner of doing it. But this, surely, is not by making his religion an assumption of superiority or of singularity among men. Nay, and direct appeal is not usually the best way of approaching them. There are occasions which may make it proper; there are intimacies which may justify it. But ordinarily the best influence, in my opinion, is the indirect influence of a man's general character and conversation. Let the heart be left to draw its own inference. It is mentioned in the biography of Robert Hall, that he never spoke to men of religion at all, in his private and parochial intercourse, though he was the most powerful preacher of it in England. You may say it was a fault. I think it was a fault. But I cannot help respecting him for it. It arose from that extreme susceptibility and delicacy of feeling, which were the elements of his extraordinary eloquence.

I have been speaking in the latter part of this discourse, of a religion that may be, and ought to be, lovely in the eyes of society. There is one example of this, which I am the more disposed to mention in close, because it comes from what is commonly considered as the ascetic side of religion. It is that of the celebrated statesman and philanthropist, William Wilberforce. "The difference between him and his fellow-Christians," says a notice of him, soon after his death, in the Edinburgh Review, "consisted in the exhibition which he made of his religion. A piety so

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profound, was never so entirely free from asceticism. It was allied to all the pursuits and all the innocent pleasures of life; we might almost say, to all its blameless whims and humors. With a settled peace of mind, arising from his piety, he felt that perfect freedom which enabled him to give the reins to his constitutional vivacity; and the most devotional of men, was at the same time, the most playful and exhilarating of companions. His presence was as fatal to dulness as to immorality. His mirth was as irresistible as the first laughter of childhood." Sir James Mackintosh said of Wilberforce, that he was "the most amusable of all men;" and yet his character was one of the grand bulwarks of the most devoted piety in England.

And I thus instance and signalize it, for the sake both of religion and virtue. They belong together. We utterly mistake in our culture, when we make our religion unamiable, or our amiableness undevout. The majestic and the lowly, the solemn and the gay are to meet in our humanity — to meet and mutually to relieve, soften, and exalt each other. Your virtue will grow dwarfish and worldly, if you sever it from the high and central reverence of religion. Nor yet do I want to see in any man's character, a too exclusive religiousness. I do not want to see what you call an Apostolic sanctity, in any man's face. I want to see the lights and shadows of human feeling blending upon it and beautifying each other. It is said of Wilberforce, that "pathos and drollery, solemn musings and playful fancies, yearnings of the soul over the tragic, and the most contagious mirth over the ludicrous events of life, all rapidly succeeding each other, and all harmoniously because unconsciously blended, threw over his conversation a spell, which no prejudice, dulness nor ill humor could resist."

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So, after his measure and manner, let it be with every man. Solemn let his musings be, and playful his fancies; deep and dear his devotion, and free for every happy mood, his life and conversation. He need not ask whether admiration will follow; let him be sure that it will follow. Social admiration is unchained, at this day, as it never was before. It is getting free from bondage to caste, to rank, to wealth, and all worldly distinctions. Every day, the ocean of human affections is rising higher and higher; and above its serene and majestic flood, I see a throne set; it is the throne of highest Goodness. Oh! if beneath that enthroned Loveliness, men could learn to live—in the lowliness of prayer and the gayety of innocence, in the heroism of self-control and the beauty of freedom, then were fulfilled that old prophecy to the Church of sanctity at once and goodness, "lift thine eyes round about thee, and see; they shall come to thee; thy sons shall come from far, and fair daughters be nursed at thy side; then shalt thou see and flow together: and thy heart shall fear, and thy heart shall be enlarged."

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VIII.

ON TRUTHFULNESS.

Eph. iv. 15. — "Speaking the truth in love."

I lay emphasis on the last word of this Apostolic direction. Speaking the truth in *love*, I suppose, is the only way in which it can be rightly spoken. It is said that truth sometimes breaks out from anger. It may; but anger is apt to confuse the mind, while good temper calms and clears it. Truth may dart from the cloud and storm of wrath; but that fierce blaze scorches where it falls; it does the office of fire and not of light; and what we seek in truth, is the calm light of life. Truth, the guide of men, is often compared to the pole-star. But that star is known to men, not by its piercing splendor, but by a softened haze around it. The comparison is perilous; but I will venture to say that truth, when shining with its purest lustre, is invested with the soft, not dark nor dense, but with the soft and transparent veil of love.

I remember an anecdote which I read, many years ago, in the London Christian Observer, of a Clergyman who in the presence of a brother Clergyman visiting him, very plainly and solemnly reproved a person who came into his study, but so reproved him as to awaken no resentment whatever. And yet, so severe was the rebuke, that when the man so dealt with, retired from their presence, the stranger could not help

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exclaiming, "How *could* you speak in that way, and not give offence!" "Ah, my friend," was the reply, "when love is in the heart, you can say any thing." This was indeed the key of the mystery. Love is the only shield of truth. Love indeed is not its basis; for truth stands in its own right; but love must arm and clothe it all round, to prepare it for its lofty action and ordeal.

To bespeak your more earnest attention to this virtue, I would say something, in the first place, of the difficulty of practising and the danger of swerving from it.

I have sometimes thought, although there are other virtues to be cultivated, that it would be well for a man, to make it, for a while, his chief moral discipline, to walk all the day long and all the month through, with this one predominant thought in his heart — "now let me, wherever I go, and whatever I am called to converse upon, speak the exact truth — no faltering, no wavering, any more; the straight line is stretched before me, and my thoughts shall cling to it, even as the mariner holds on to the line, that is stretched from the ship to the shore, to stay him amidst the waves. My reserves I may have; delicacy, modesty imposes them, and the rights of my own mind justify them; but so far as I do speak, I will say precisely what I think; my tongue, without wavering, shall answer to my thought; it shall not be an instrument of deception in my mouth, in this threshold of the soul; it shall not be there like a cheating porter to lie for the master within; truth shall enshrine my heart, and my utterance shall be its unfaltering oracle; truth is not mine to bandy about at my pleasure, but it is an immortal law, to bind me forever; and I will no more think it possible to swerve, than the prophet as he stands by

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the very altar of revelation." So said St. Paul, resolute in that, as Luther was before the German Diet, "we *can* say nothing against the truth, but for the truth." And so should every man say, whether he speaks from the pulpit, from the bar, or from the bench, by the fireside or by the wayside, at home or abroad, in the social throng or the throng of the Exchange. How would this simple purpose dignify every situation, every interview, and even the otherwise humblest talk! For we entirely mistake, if we suppose that because we are occupied with little things, we must be governed by little principles. We lose the very grandeur of life and are blind to the very truth of things, if we do so. No: principles high as heaven bear down upon every moment, and the eyes of infinite Rectitude, like the all-encompassing dome of stars, look — look down, upon every action and upon every thought.

In that awful presence, what can live and hold up its head but truth, truth constant and unwavering? You may tell me that it is difficult; and I admit it. It is the highest and the most instantly pressing trial of virtue. The temptations to sensuality come comparatively but seldom; and when they prevail they bring dishonor with them. But the world is full, I am afraid we must say, of respectable lying. It mingles with business, it mingles with politics; it spreads itself all over the face of society; in evasions that deceive, and innuendoes that mislead, and civilities that are heartless and smiles that are false, and words that do not mean what they say — idle compliments and silly flatteries, the only resources of brainless young men, and the only satisfactions of equally brainless young women, sophistries unceasing as the hours, shadings of speech, not designed to present the truth, but to please — forever to

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please. Oh! the soul of a man, that is as a rattle-box, hollow, hollow, with nothing in it, but fictions and sophistries, or like a dice-box, with nothing but false dice in it. Is it a thing unheard of? Is it altogether rare? But I will tell you what *is* rare; a man or a woman who always speaks the true, true thought—*that* is a wonder in society. You know that it is. I will find you a thousand orthodox Christians, and a hundred liberal ones, and fifty philanthropists, and ten times as many zealots, for one man that always speaks his true, true thought.

"What!" you may say, "is Christianity to come here? We thought it was confined to Churches, and altars, and closets, and such-like places." Yes, sirs, I answer, it is to come here. It is to come where men live and breathe and talk, and act their daily and hourly part in society.

"Well," you may say, "it is all in vain to speak of it. The thing demanded is too difficult to be done." Still I grant that it is difficult. It is hard to say to your neighbor just what you think. He explains to you how he has made what he calls a good bargain, and you do not approve of it; it is hard to tell him so. He has bought a house, or furniture, or a picture, and he wants you to admire his taste, and you do not; it is hard to say that. He has cherished children, or dear friends, and he wants your good opinion of them; it is hard to refuse it. He wants a recommendation for himself to some place or situation, he wants a testimonial to qualities which he has not; it is very hard to say, "I cannot give it." I am fully sensible of the danger of swerving. I confess for myself, that I like to agree with people. I do not like to contradict them. It is *very* disagreeable to me. When one says of a lecture, or sermon or poem or song, "was it

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not beautiful?" I do not want to say, no. And observe that I do not say a man is bound to speak all that he thinks. He may be silent. He may make no answer. Or he may, I conceive, often come to that point with his neighbor, where he will say, "now I do not wish to speak on that subject, because I differ with you and may offend you;" but if he is urged and compelled to go on, then as God's law of truth is upon his soul, let him speak what he thinks; let him speak it if he die. To die is comparatively a small thing; to lie, is to kill the soul.

But we must press this matter to a closer statement, and to a more exact definition of the moral law with regard to it. Let me premise that it is my business to state the law; as it would be, if I were to speak of the love of our neighbor, or forgiveness of injuries or honesty in trade. If any one shall think that he can find exceptions — cases in which he is *not* bound to love his neighbor or to forgive him, or to be honest, or to speak the truth, I can only say that the burthen is upon his conscience; I cannot take it upon mine.

But let us now proceed to consider what is the nature and obligation of this virtue. What is it, to speak the truth? And why is a man bound to speak it?

First, what is it, to speak the truth? It is to say nothing with the intent to deceive. The essence of the thing lies in the intention. What we say may be literally true; and yet if it is said with the purpose of misleading another, it is falsehood; just as much as if the thing itself were false. My neighbor cannot see my thought. I propose, I profess when I speak, to show it to him. He confides in my doing so; why else should he listen to me? Words are the medium of communication. Now if I speak to him a word,

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which, whether literally true or false, is intended to deceive him, I as truly falsify, as if I passed upon him a base coin instead of pure gold. The bond which he has taken from my lips, has proved fictitious, valueless, and worse than valueless.

I need not dwell upon a case so plain. It is mere inanity of mind that can lead any such palterer with words to say, "did I not speak exactly what was true?" And on the other hand, it is an equally mistaken scruple, that leads any one to hesitate about the morality of parables, stories and fictions; because that in these, there is no intent to deceive.

But why is a man bound to speak the truth? I answer, because it is right. The obligation, though it may be enforced by utility, is found in the very nature of the thing.

Duties may be divided into two kinds, relative and absolute. There are actions, which are made right or wrong by circumstances, such as labor, charity, hospitality. Sometimes it is right to perform such actions, and sometimes not. But truth-telling is one of the absolute duties. It is always right to speak truly. If there are any circumstances which may make it *seem* right to tell a lie, they must be very extraordinary; too extraordinary for common life — tremendous emergencies, which must furnish, if they can, their own special vindication; as when it is believed that a city may be saved from a besieging army, by a false word spoken to a guide or spy. They must be stronger cases, I think, than are ordinarily put, to justify falsehood.

The cases ordinarily put, are such as these. A robber, with intent to murder, asks me the way which a traveller has taken. May I not tell him a falsehood, to divert him from his purpose? Or, having made me

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his victim, he swears me to secrecy as the price of life. May I not break my word? Again, my friend is sick; his life hangs by a thread. His child, let us suppose, has died in an adjoining room. If I tell him of his loss, my opinion is that it will be fatal to him. May I not then, morning after morning, and hour after hour, tell him that his child is recovering? Yet again; the physician has a patient, whose chances of recovery, he thinks, depend on his being at ease and undisturbed in mind. The patient asks him, whether there is any alarming or fatal symptom in his case. The physician believes that there is. May he answer and say, he believes not?

Now, whatever others may say of these cases, I cannot say, yes. The one question involved, is simply this — is it right to lie, to save life? — or to speak more exactly, for the chance of saving life? For we do not know, in any of these cases, that life would be sacrificed, by speaking the truth. There is uncertainty in the very motive we plead; the only certainty is the blank and positive falsehood. But suppose that we did know. The martyr knows that a lie would save him. Would we have him speak it? It would discrown the very glory of the world to say so. Besides, where would this argument for falsehood stop? Life is at hazard in Courts of Justice, and it may be thought to be so, in courses of business. A dishonest bankrupt may say, "it would kill my wife and children, to be stripped of every thing." And there are those, to whom their property or reputation is dearer than life. Then the argument that justifies falsehood, comes into accounts, comes into trade, comes into society, comes everywhere. And is there not in fact, a permitted laxity in the world with regard to truth-telling, that must have sprung from some false principle, a prin-

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ciple therefore, which is doing infinitely greater harm than can be counterbalanced by any good that is gained by it, in certain occasional and extraordinary circumstances?

Some have thought it sufficient to say, and among them Dr. Paley, that our enemy or the robber, who is the enemy of society, has no right to know the truth. That, I answer, is not the question. The question is, not what are his rights, but what is right for us. If a man commits a purse of gold to me in trust, to be returned at his demand, certainly no bad character or bad intent of his, could justify me in withholding it. I have taken the trust, and must discharge it. And so when I profess to speak the truth, I have taken a trust, and must discharge it. I am not obliged to speak. I may keep silence. But if I do speak, I am obliged to speak the truth. Suppose that intrusted property might be withheld or misused on the plea that the owner was a bad man, and had no right to fidelity on our part; where then would be faith or honor or trust in society?

But more than expediency is to be heard in this argument. There is a higher law which is proclaimed in every healthful human conscience. No such conscience ever found it a pleasing thing to tell a lie. Whatever necessity be pleaded for it, it is a painful necessity. If there ever was a palpable case, in which an Authority above us, speaks within us, I believe this is that case. And to bring it to the clearest test — if it is right to tell a falsehood, it is right to call God to witness. But could any man without horror call God to witness the truth of what he knew to be false? That, in courts of Law, is called perjury, and it is punished as such by our human law. Yet God is witness to every falsehood. The splendors of his

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omniscience as truly surround it, as they do the act of perjury amidst the solemnities of an oath.

My argument, very brief indeed, is brought to a conclusion; but so perhaps, is not the mind of my hearer. At least, I can conceive that some one, surprised and even indignant, at what he may think such an extreme of moral rigor, may say, — "you strain the bond so hard that it will snap. It is not wise to teach as you do. If it is bad to demand too little in morals, it may be hurtful to demand too much." What, then, would the objector have me say? Would it not be a fine moral precept to put forth — "you must speak the truth generally; but you may utter a falsehood when you think it necessary?" The falsest man would be content with this license. No, the true wisdom is to lift up the standard of duty, and not to let it down. The true moral prudence, and if I may say so, policy with our own minds, is not to plead for lying, but for truth.

And further: if there be any that hear me, who are either surprised or indignant at what they may call this extreme of moral rigor, one thing I have to say in fine, and it is this. Take whatever ground you will, and however low, one thing you will not deny — that to be true and more true, to tell the truth and act the truth more and more, this is the upward path. Granting this, you will give me all that I ask in behalf of the soul's culture and progress. Whatever difficulties there may be, whatever questions in mere casuistry may be put, one thing I still say, is clear, and for this end I have endeavored to impress your minds with the solemn sanctions of this virtue; and that is, that we should constantly aim and endeavor, to bring more and more of truth into our minds, into our hearts, into our conversation, into our business, into our whole life's duty and culture.

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And I am not willing to leave the subject without saying something, in the last place, of the value and greatness of this virtue, and of the place it should hold, in both our personal and social improvement. Lightly as it is apt to be regarded, easily and idly as it is shoved aside, I ask, is it a small thing — either for ourselves, or for society?

Nay, I think that it has a strong claim, not only in its worth, but in its advantages, both personal and social. How would it simplify and dignify a man's life, for him to hold to the truth! It would lead him out of a dark labyrinth, into the open daylight. He would have no perplexing or petty interests to consult, but only the simple monitor within. His soul would not be ever running abroad, in every direction, upon all the sensitive fibres of social vanity, jealousy and rivalship, but would stay at home, seated calmly upon the throne of conscious integrity. And then too, what an advantage would it be to others! Half of the misunderstandings in the world live only upon falsehood or concealment. One word of truth would break like lightning upon the cloud and disperse it. How many vague and injurious suspicions or positive misrepresentations concerning any one of *you*, may have been stealing through society for years, and might have been cleared away, if one of the many words spoken behind your back, had been spoken to your face! Who has not had occasion, at some moment of his life, to feel that something was the matter between him and others — he did not know what. Who, indeed, does not feel that he is liable to be misconstrued, that there are circumstances, peculiarities in his case, which others cannot know; and who, in such case, would not be glad if some one would speak plainly to him? I would not advocate any intrusiveness; but every man must have

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some acquaintances who are entitled to speak to him in such a case. And there must be more than one among us, who is ready to say, "I am willing to open my bosom-purposes to all the world. There is not a principle nor point in my life and conduct, which I am not perfectly willing with a kind friend or acquaintance, freely and fairly to discuss. Whether I am thought guilty of pride, or duplicity, or self-indulgence, or covetousness or unkindness, or neglect of my duties in any way, let me hear: if I cannot defend it, I will mend it."

It seems degrading to me and others, to be ever keeping up appearances. It involves real discourtesy to a man to imply by constant flatteries or softenings of speech towards him, that he cannot bear the truth, that his vanity or selfishness or sensitiveness will be ever up in arms against it, that he can bear nothing manly nor honest from those around him, that he has none of the nobleness either of self-subsistence or of humility. There is no true respect shown, either for himself or for anybody else, by this ever-polite palliation, but the very contrary. It shows that society is full of faults. Nor is there any dignity in this restraint. It is not candor nor consideration, but only mean cowardice. For *do* men never speak and speak plainly of the faults of their neighbors? Yes, by *themselves* they can talk — talk long and eloquently and very piteously of the errors and mistakes of their friends; nothing is *like* the discrimination and detail and ingenuity of speech, which they can show *there*. But let them come into the presence of one of these unfortunate acquaintances; and then that tongue which just before was sharp as a sword, and rough as a file, becomes pliant and obsequious as a whipped menial. This is not the enforced slavery that chains the limbs of a

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man; it is the far more degrading, because it is the voluntary slavery of the tongue, of the most immediate organ of the soul.

Besides, society for its own improvement, has a right to ask something from society, beyond this constant evasion and double dealing. One mind does not discharge its duty to another, when clothed in this costume of fashionable common-place. "Speak to me," I am sometimes tempted to say, "speak to me thy thought: *say something;* say any thing; say what is strange, odd, or even erroneous, so thou say what thou thinkest, what thou dost feel, and not merely what thou thinkest decorous and polite. I might as well be talking with parrots, I might as well be dealing with machines, as with people who are forever seeming what they are not, and saying what they do not feel; who are cut and shaped by fashion, as truly as their garments are. In fact, how little do we ever come to know one another in these formal civilities of society! How refreshing in such scenes, is one word of reality; one word that puts upon mind, the stamp of individuality! A person, perfectly true and natural, is like a fresh stream in the desert. "Oh! that she would do an odd thing," said Goethe: and who has not sometimes felt it? One such thing done: in other words, one natural action, one thing spoken in pure self-forgetfulness, one genuine outspeaking from the heart, is like a talisman, that dissolves some rigid and painful spell of all surrounding affectation.

I am sensible that observations like these, are liable to be misconstrued. I advocate no undue forwardness, no indecorum. Let there be dignity, a proper reserve and a perfect courtesy. The beauty of society lies in the combination. The highest perfection of this kind, is found in the highest good breeding; not in a

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"threatening urbanity," as some one has called it, not in that sharply defined etiquette, that makes society look to one of the uninitiated, as if it were full of spring-guns, swords and scymitars. Dr. Franklin was put as much at ease in Parisian society, as he would have been among the craft of printers at home. This observation relates, it is true, to mere perfection of manners; but it shows that grace and simplicity are not at war; and I say that truth and an easy and kind behavior need not be; and I have ventured upon the freedom of these remarks, because I cannot allow it to be objected, that simplicity is dangerous to decorum, or that truth must be maintained at the expense of courtesy.

But if to combine truth with courtesy be thought difficult, there is another thing, calling for a still loftier elevation and nobleness of character; and that is to combine truth with love. You say, perhaps, "how am I honestly to treat those whom I do not like, who differ from me in their opinions, or tastes, or culture! They are of my acquaintance, they come to me; by what means am I to be at once hospitable to them, and true to myself?" I answer, by truly loving them, by a hearty good will, by a desire to promote their happiness, by taking real pleasure in such offices of hospitality and goodness. Such, we are told by his biographers, was the spirit of the German philosopher and poet, Novalis. He really loved to talk with what are called ordinary people: he wanted to know, as indeed he loved, all men; and I imagine that we shall, none of us, pretend to a higher or purer or more peculiar culture, than that of Novalis. In truth it is the mark of a hard, defective and ungenial cultivation, to be bristling all over with points of repugnance to those who are not just like ourselves; who are not as gifted or

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accomplished as we are, or as we think we are. It is a want of the large humanity. It is unworthy of cultivated minds. It belongs to the littleness and technicality of superficial fashion — where, indeed, it reigns supreme. Or must we make the exception that there is a certain vile pride of intellect that is worse? At any rate, it is more unpardonable. The true, large, noble mind sees that which is kindred to it in every man — sees gentle humanity everywhere, and might see virtues, beneath the humblest garb, that would shame all its fine culture.

Yes, we are put to that severe test in our intercourse with men — whether we love them. If we do not, then we must sacrifice truth, or sacrifice general society. There is no alternative. If we have not a genuine and generous good-heartedness, we must meet with many people whom we do not wish to meet, whom for no reason, do we wish to meet. And then if our manners say that we have any sort of pleasure in their company, they will involve a sacrifice of our truth. A popular person must be a very good-hearted person, or a hypocrite.

Now every one desires to be popular, or at least to be agreeable. It is one of the strongest desires of our nature. No one wishes to make an unpleasant or ungrateful impression upon those with whom he mingles in society. And here it is, amidst mingled sympathies, affections, partialities, and almost boundless cravings for esteem, that every man and every woman must stand firm — must speak the truth, and to do so, they must speak it in love.

But whether in love or in hate, I am tempted to say, let every man speak it. If he has not love to support him, let him fall back on the stern principle of rectitude. Give me a rough, blunt, honest man, rather than

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a time-server or a parasite. Give me a Luther rather than an Erasmus, a Hampden or a Pym rather than a double-dealing Strafford, a fearless Paul rather than a flattering Tertullus. One there has been, greater than the Apostle, greater than all, who came into the world to bear witness to the truth, and who, endowed with unparalleled gentleness and pity, ever spoke the truth, spoke it at the cost of ease, of favor with men, and of life itself. He died a martyr to the truth. And by no means could the preacher so shock and pain a Christian audience, as by admitting that ever by one act or word, did he swerve from the conscious truth that was in him.

This then, do I set forth, my friends, as one of the loftiest and most imperative of the Christian virtues. Does any man ask to do some signal thing in his life? Does he say that he would be a religious man, but does not know how to set about it? I answer, let him speak the truth. Let him do it always. Let him do it immediately. The word is nigh him, in his heart and in his mouth, to do it. In the next conversation he holds, let him speak the truth. If he talks about this discourse which he has heard, let him speak the truth. And let him not fool nor falsify his own heart, by saying, that there is no religion in it. It should be a religion in his heart, to speak the truth. It is indeed, a thing most spiritual to which he is called. It may be a regeneration to which he is called. It is a religious reverence for the ever-present, the all witnessing God of truth.

Let him, I still say, speak the truth. Let him speak it the next thing he speaks. Let him speak it, always and everywhere — at home and abroad, in the house and by the way, at the trading-house and the horse-fair, when he buys and when he sells, in business and in

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society, in life and in death, let him speak the true word.

Could I bring any who hear me, and especially those just entering upon life, to a solemn resolve ever to speak the truth — call it what you will, religion or morality, I care not — I should feel that I had not spoken in vain. That right habit would instantly begin to correct every wrong habit. All evil, all wrong, all debasing license of the senses, is covered over with lying. Strip off that covering; and the world would become guilty before God; and a grand reform would begin, where the Gospel begins it, with repentance.

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IX.

ON IMPATIENCE.

Ps. xxxvii. 1, 7, 8.—"Fret not thyself because of evil doers, neither be thou envious against the workers of iniquity. Rest in the Lord, and wait patiently for him; fret not thyself because of him who prospereth in his way; because of the man who bringeth wicked devices to pass. Cease from anger and forsake wrath; fret not thyself in any wise to do evil."

IMPATIENCE—fretting against evil-doers, ay, and against those who do well, but do not things in the right way; fretting not only at men but things; fretting at obstacles and inconveniences, and especially at petty annoyances and vexations—this is a state of mind, I am inclined to think, more common and more indefensible, than is apt to be suspected. On preaching once, a sermon upon conscience, in which I had endeavored to extend the sphere of conscience to a wider circle than is usually embraced by it, a thoughtful hearer, said to me, when coming out of Church, "Yes, it is all true; but you have not touched *me*." "Ah?" I said," how not?" "Because," was the reply, "*my* sin is impatience."

I was led to reflect on the subject. I could not recollect that I had ever heard a sermon upon it. And yet it appeared to me probable, as I thought of it, that this very fault covered more ground than any other in life. I saw that it was more likely than many other faults, to be kept out of sight. Impatience, it is true, is apt to break out in hasty words and actions; but it is often a solitary vice. A man may fret *him-*

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self and nobody may know it. Loss of self-possession is loss of self-respect; and one would take care not to disclose it. Into the whole texture of life, may be woven these cross threads of impatience, and all done in the silent loom of thought. A man may fret, his life long, at his neighbor's prosperity, yet more at what he considers his neighbor's perverseness and incivility; and never speak of it. Many a one, if he were to tell us what passes in his private apartment, would confess an occasional irritation, with the arrangements or *dis*arrangements rather, with his wardrobe, his toilet, his pen and ink, or his fire, that was too cold or too hot — going to the length of flinging down or breaking things; of which the world knows nothing.

Doubtless there are different temperaments, which are likely to develop this tendency to haste and passion in different degrees. There *are* men who apparently have *no nerves*, nothing in them that feels the edge of annoyance. And there are men who are not only nervous, but earnest and impetuous; the onward rush of whose spirits cannot encounter obstacles without some disturbance. And doubtless too, it is to be considered, though it seldom *is* sufficiently considered in our moral teachings, that every tendency in our nature, has its uses as well as abuses. A person, not at *all* impatient at failure and frustration, not in the least vexed at his own blundering and forgetfulness, or at the negligence or carelessness of others, would be scarce likely to be making himself better, or persons and things around him better. He who has earnestly set his heart upon having things done in the best way — in his house, in his office, on his farm or in his factory, in society or in his country — can hardly see things go wrong, without an emotion bordering on

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impatience. Men may be *too* patient — of disarray in their dwellings and about them, or of disorder in their affairs, of evils and wrongs in society: such patience has no virtue in it, nor the promise of any.

Still, it will not be denied, that the contrary tendency may, and commonly does, go too far; and I shall now propose for your consideration, some thoughts that may show the reasonableness of bringing it under due control.

I have admitted that this tendency has its uses. That is to say, when it is simply a strong dissatisfaction with what is wrong or imperfect, and what it is in our power to amend, it is a good element. But when it is a fretting at what we can't help, when it is, in any way, a hasty and passionate emotion, then it is *not* good; and this is what we commonly mean by impatience.

And before speaking of it on moral grounds, I may say in passing, that on economical grounds, it must be pronounced to be very *unwise*. There is an economy of our powers, always to be considered in a wise culture; and impatience is a waste of them, and a useless waste: it does no good. No knot of difficulty, as no literal knot, is best untied by hasty and violent hands. Things may be botched, or they may be torn in pieces, but they are never well mended, by haste or anger. *Calmly setting about* the correction of what is wrong, is the only way to repair it. *Calmness* and *method* — these two qualities, I believe, characterize all successful effort; but there is neither calmness nor method in impatience. And, in fine, it does no good, any way. It does not lessen the obstacle, but only the skill to remove it. There is no help in it, but only blindness and frustration. So much wear and tear of the spirit, so much chafing and strife and discomfort in the mind, ought to have some compensation; but there is none

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at all. It is all beating the air, and labor in vain. Here are fit powers and apt instruments to do the work — the work of life in every kind; memory and judgment and will, eyes and hands and fingers; but they are all thrown into confusion by impatience. If a machine, fitted in its orderly going on, to do a certain thing, were suddenly to fall into disorder, twitching and racking and pulling contrary ways, the master would immediately stop it: he would decide, at once, that things must not go on in that way. In the machine, it would be disorder; in the man, it is distraction and folly: and the governing reason ought to say, "stop, and wait, till you are arranged for some orderly proceeding." Fret not thyself because of evil doers, or imperfect doings; fret not thyself in any wise to do evil.

It *is* doing evil, to fret ourselves in any wise; and this is what I proposed especially to consider. And the ground on which I place this moral view, is this: that, as imperfect beings, we have our part assigned to us in this world, amidst circumstances and objects that are meant to cultivate and improve us; that all which tasks and tries, and which we suffer perhaps, to irritate and vex us, was designed *not* to irritate and vex us, but to cultivate our faculties, to nurture in us strength, aptitude, endurance; to spread a field for the calm victory of reason and virtue over the obstacles that surround us. Impatience, then, is an offence against the whole order of Providence. And as in good minds, it arises from failing to consider this, it is this that I would attempt to show.

Observe, in the first place, that by no conceivable, I think I may say, by no possible arrangement of things, could obstruction and difficulty be removed from the system. If indeed these hindrances and obstacles

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were gratuitous, if they were put into the system for no other purpose than to thwart and vex us, then might we justly complain. But there *can* be no adjustment of freely-working and imperfect natures to any conceivable set of instruments, without involving more or less trial of patience. Instinct or mechanism may perhaps be made to work with unerring precision; the bee may build its cell without mistake; the band may be exactly fitted to the pulley, the cog to the wheel: but so cannot the free will, so cannot an imperfect and experimenting nature, work into any conditions. The elements may be ever so perfect, but the imperfection of the agent must always create difficulty. Nay more, if there were no difficulty; if man, like the animal, walked in the paths of unerring instinct, not only would he not be a moral agent, but he would not be an improving agent. Difficulty is the very school of culture and progress.

So it is then; so it is inevitably, in the very nature of things: so it is ordained to be: and any thing in us, that resists or thwarts this constitution of things, is hostile to the especial wisdom and law of that Providence which has made us, and appointed all our relations to the objects around us. Now impatience is that very thing. I need not repeat that it does no good; that it does not help us at all in any respect: it is *more* than negative; it is a positive quarrel with the great discipline of life.

Let us consider the matter in some detail. Impatience has various provocations; events and circumstances provoke it; men and things; things great and small, but chiefly of the latter kind. Great calamities, as has been often observed, perilous sickness, approaching death, dread bereavement, usually weigh down to awful resignation or to more awful despair, the lesser irritations of the mind.

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Here is a being then, who is placed in a thousand contacts with a thousand little things. He may have great aims, he may be a great man; but he must deal with small instruments; and not only with little things, but with little men. But to speak more properly of every man's vocation; it is not to roll on the great world, nor to wield the thunder, nor to sweep the skies with cloud and tempest; but to till the ground, with plough and hoe and harrow; or to build houses, with saw and chisel and hammer, or to manufacture or barter the conveniences of life, or to paint or write with pen or pencil, or to play skilfully on an instrument. Now every one of these things is liable to get out of order. Nothing can man touch, but it may break or wear out, or rust and be dulled, and not work well; or become entangled and full of hindrance and thwarting to his immediate design. Or if he would do — one of the greatest things that man *can* do — *think* grandly, and grandly utter his thought; if he would put forth, and speak, and embody in himself some great word, that shall task his powers to the uttermost, some great word that shall be truth and guidance to his country or to the world; still, how dimly the matter reveals itself to him at the first! Or if one bright point shines out, how many imperfect thoughts and phrases are to be formed and fashioned and shaded and adjusted! They will not leap forth perfect for his use, but must be painfully elaborated into a result. Then must he be patient. In work or study he must be patient. Familiar is what the great Newton said, but it may be repeated here, as most significant; "if I have surpassed other men, it is only by dint of patient thinking."

Then, I say, he must be patient; patient of labor, patient with difficulty, with contradiction. It is God's

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most special ordinance for the life-task — patience. He is not only cast into a world of a thousand little things, but of things neither ready-made for him nor precisely adjusted to an unerring use: the very contrary is the fact. He cannot, like the animal live under the open sky, and eat and lie down and rise up, without care. He must build his house; and he must furnish his house: and he must keep his house. A house builded, furnished, kept — it is a brief description; but it is the epitome of endless cares. Nothing will be, or at least, nothing will *keep*, as we want it. The spider will weave in the window and the cornice; the busy ant and buzzing fly will bring annoyance; and every apartment will be choked with disarray and discomfort, if we do not constantly put things in order. Farm, and garden, and workshop and factory, in like manner, will go all to wreck and ruin, if there is not this constant and minute attention.

What does all this mean? Why is it that man, with the vast reach of his nature, the vast breadth of his comprehension, must contract his attention to things so minute? Because, as I conceive, this is the natural ordinance for such a being; because, that is to say, he is not yet fit to deal with greater things *alone;* his nature could not bear the strain. If all men were *statesmen* for instance, they would sink under the load, as even the few often do. Indeed I have often thought that the monotony of many of our employments — the routine, felt to be so tedious, of sewing and stitching, of making pins and buttons, and of other similar avocations, might act usefully as a sedative and relief for the over-strained faculties. But certain it is that things many and minute, necessarily make up the sum of influences by which man is fashioned and formed to wisdom and excellence. The instruments that chip

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the marble into a perfect statue, are many of them very small; some of them hardly larger than a needle's point. If man had to meet some moral crisis or to practise some high virtue, but once in a day or once in a month, it might be far easier and far less noble, than it is to answer the call, and to be equal to the exigency, of every hour's, of every moment's discipline.

I must insist on this as a significant and *not*, though at first it may seem to be, a mysterious ordination of providence. When I look into a summer parlor, and see the man who sits there — the paragon of creatures on earth, the chief and head of the world — assailed all day by insect annoyances, the gnat, the fly, the mosquito, it is something so disproportionate and singular, that I ask a reason for it. And I do not say, that the only reason is a *moral* one. These swarms of insect life, scavengers of the air, minister to health; and they may minister in ways not commonly thought of; they may keep the sluggish from sleeping through all the summer afternoon, and the surfeited, for aught I know, from apoplexy. But they may have, I conceive, another and moral ministry; for they are not the smallest things that are put into the sphere of the human training. That is to say, they may be part and parcel of a great system, in which ease, quiescence, indulgence are not the object, but patience, self-government, wakeful thought and watchful virtue; and the buzzing fly may help to that, as well as the flying mote or thread-like nerves. It is thus, at any rate, that men must pursue all the great tasks of life; amidst the interruptions and stings of a thousand petty annoyances and thwarting difficulties. The plough and the harrow will break in the field; the tire will part from the wheel, or the horse will cast his shoe in the way; the thread will

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slip from the needle, and the needle's eye is small, and will be blind, to the dimmed sight; the garments we wear, will not exactly fit; neither food nor fuel will do a perfect service; a certain pertinacious tendency to disorder or discomfort will meet us at every turn; the course of nothing will run smooth; men, as well as things, will disappoint and disturb us; the imperfections of our fellow-beings will annoy us; engagements with them will not dove-tail into one another; all agencies will not coalesce; some will be too slow, and others too fast: what then are we to do? We must be patient; or be the fools and sport of circumstances. We must be patient, or lose the day, lose the battle of every day's life. We cannot escape the conflict. We must fight the battle, and win or lose. Patience is victory: impatience is miserable and mean defeat. Patience is gain: impatience is loss, is frustration, so far as it goes, of the very end of life.

Does not life, in this view, does not daily life, rise before us in a serious and even solemn aspect? Man is placed here to learn. He is at school. What, if, instead of studying the book, he tears the leaves in pieces like a froward child, and scatters them upon the wind? What if, instead of calmly addressing himself to the removal of obstacles, to bringing order out of confusion, to rectifying errors and meeting disappointments, and untying the knots of difficulty, he frets and rages and involves and entangles all in greater difficulty? What if, instead of acquiescing in the plan of life, and laboring to bring himself into harmony with the system of nature, he petulantly throws all into worse confusion, worse than nature ever made for him? *Could* he set himself more directly against the very order of Providence? Could he more palpably disobey, if he plainly *said*, "I will *not* submit to things as they are — I will *not* submit to Heaven?"

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And the misery of this temper, shows the evil of it. No man is more constantly unhappy, or makes others more so, than the impatient man. He is out of harmony with *things;* and all things fight and worry and wound him. He feels himself dishonored, too, by his impatience; and he does lose, so far as he indulges it, the true dignity of life. He is not cast indeed, like the victim of sensual vice, into the slough of dishonor; his garment perhaps is not *soiled;* but it is burnt through, in a thousand spots, by the ever-dropping little sparks of petulance; and it is in tatters and disorder with the ever-crossing flurries of angry passion; and he seems to himself and to others, as one who scrambles through life, rather than as one who walks in the calm and dignified robe of conscious self-possession. Constant fretting and fault-finding and breaking out into sarcasm and anger, may bereave a house of all honor, peace, and comfort, almost as effectually as gluttony and drunkenness. Or suppose that the fretful temper be hidden and smothered in the heart; then it wastes and consumes the springs of the inmost life.

I cannot but suppose that any person conscious of this tendency, would gladly consider how it is to be checked and controlled. Let us therefore, in a few words, direct our thoughts in close, to the remedies for impatience.

And the first is, distinctly and deliberately to settle our minds to the *expectation* of difficulties. It is for this reason, in part, that I have endeavored to lay open the plan of human culture by *little* tasks and trials of our intelligence and virtue; and to show that this is an inevitable part of the common lot. The impatient are always *surprised* by their difficulties and disappointments. Nay, they often go to the length of imagining,

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that trials and mishaps are their peculiar ill luck. They complain as if untoward chance made them its special mark and butt. "It *always* rains, when *they* want to travel. The harness *always* breaks, when *they* ride. The water is *always* low, when *their* corn is to be ground. Their neighbor is *always* engaged, when *they* want him; the smith is *always* shoeing a *horse*, when they want him to make a *staple*." Nay, it goes to the length of being a sort of superstition; and the man says, "I knew it would be just so: things never *do* come right for *me*."

Now what I have to recommend to the impatient man, in the first place, is that he work out and eliminate from his problem, as fast as he can, this element of surprise, this notion of a peculiarity in his case, this idea that he is honored with the special attention, as of some hostile power. It is *not* so. His is the common lot. Let him calmly say then in every crisis, at every turn of his hand to a new thing, at the threshold of his apartment when he enters it, "of course there will be difficulties here: nothing is perfect; no condition, no place can be free from obstruction or inconvenience; no task can offer perfect facility; and what I have to do is, to meet, to disentangle or to overcome the difficulties of every task, of every situation and emergency, as a part of the very thing I have to do." You are not vexed because you have to build a house, or to entertain friends or distinguished persons in it, or to conduct an active or prosperous business in the world, or to fill an honorable office. It is when mistakes, crosses, disappointments, are to be met, that you are vexed. But this is a part of the very thing to be done; of the building, the entertaining, the business, the office. This meeting with *mistakes* and *crosses*, I say, is a part of it. I think if every man would fairly settle this

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with himself, and could learn to say to every petty mischance, "yes, of course, something must task and try me at every step" — he would find great help in that single conviction. And then too, if he be a wise man, he will see to it, that he does not go on constantly making and multiplying trials of this sort, by his own improvidence, negligence and carelessness.

The next remedy for impatience, is a reasonable submission to the will of Providence. This, every right-minded man must desire to render, if he believes in a Providence, and believes that the small occasions which try his patience, are a part of it. But they *are* a part of it. We *see* that they are a part of it. We know that they must be. The divine ordering of all things, implies the ordering of every thing. There *is* a Providence, that reigns over all the scene and lot of our life. In the buzzing insect, its wisdom speaks, as truly as in the winged tempest; in the fall of a sparrow as truly as in the fall of an empire. The hairs of our head are numbered; and every thread in the tangled skein of events is numbered, and hath its ministry. *Out* from that tangled skein, out from each trivial event and circumstance, out from the thorn-bush by the wayside, God's wisdom is speaking, as truly as from the height of heaven. Forever is it teaching; forever must we be learning; in lowliness, in submission, in patience must we be learning. Believe me, the thought I utter, is not too high for the humblest occasion. In the thought of God alone, is sovereign strength and sacred calmness. The lowliest virtue is thus linked to the throne of heaven. Impatience is unbelief—is denial of God: and unbelief is perdition, the very soul's misery. Thus is the great truth of Scripture brought down to be truth of every moment.

In fine, the lofty and admirable state of a mind that

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has got rid of its impatience, may well win us to make the effort for that calm and sacred freedom. I do not doubt there is more than one who hears me, that might justly say — "I would give more to obtain that calmness, and self-control; it more concerns my inmost honor and happiness, than to learn ten languages, or to gain tens of thousands of gold." The occasions that try us, may be small; but the principle that governs us, must be the greatest possible. The littleness of the events and instruments that we are dealing with is ever cheating us out of the true grandeur of life. "Greater is he that ruleth his own spirit, than he that taketh a city." A man may rule an empire, and yet not govern himself. A man may stand, brave and calm and self-possessed, the battle's shock, that breaks into the awful house of life, and yet may be disturbed and shaken in spirit, and utterly thrown from his self-possession, by the breaking of a china jar. He may drive his car of victory through fields which epic song shall celebrate; and yet be completely upset by the snapping of a harpstring. Oh! fine and delicate and manifold and much entangled are the tissues of life which surround us; and he who brings music out of the discord, and harmony out of confusion; he who walks through life with an even temper and a gentle patience, patient with himself, patient with others, patient with difficulties and crosses, thoughtful, not of showy appearances, but of inmost realities, thoughtful of virtue and of God; he has an every-day greatness, beyond that which is won in battle, or chanted in cathedrals, or heralded with the shout and pageantry of a triumphal procession.

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X.

ON SELF-RENUNCIATION.

HEB. xi. 25. — "Choosing rather to suffer affliction with the people of God, than to enjoy the pleasures of sin for a season."

I HAVE heard it said in a sermon on these words — somewhat strangely I thought, since it seemed to browbeat the very text — that there *are* no pleasures of sin. The meaning of the preacher was, I suppose, that there are no ultimate advantages in it. Now that the balance of happiness, during any period that is sufficient for the trial, is on the side of virtue, is doubtless true. But the text itself admits that there are "pleasures of sin" — though brief and transitory, though for a season — and it places upon that very ground, the grandeur of the principle, which it commends to our admiration.

And what is that? It is the principle which is commonly, though for a reason I shall presently state, not very happily denominated, self-renunciation or self-sacrifice. Renunciation of selfishness, would be a juster description of it. It is, in other words, a preferring of virtue, cost what it may, to any pleasures or advantages that can be enjoyed without it. Moses "chose rather to suffer with the people of God," than to be happy or honored with any other people. Egypt, its King and Court were there to allure him with every pleasure; and there, abroad, in the fields,

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in the brick-yards, were his poor, despised people — toil and scorn their lot. He did not hesitate which to choose. But it was great choosing. It was a great principle to act upon. "Renounce," it says to us, — "renounce thy selfish and pleasure-seeking self, for what is right. Choose the right, rather than advantage. Choose virtue, rather than enjoyment. Choose virtue, singly, first of all, and for its own sake; and let enjoyment take care of itself. Better to endure want or pain as a good man, than to enjoy pleasure or wealth as a bad man. You can do without pleasure; you can do without wealth; you can do without worldly éclat or advantage; but you cannot *do* without integrity, truth, honesty, inward honor.

I have said that self-sacrifice or self-renunciation is not the best phrase to set forth this principle. For in true obedience to it a man does *not* sacrifice nor renounce, but cherishes and gratifies his highest self, the loftiest and dearest faculty of his nature, his sense of rectitude. That the highest point of virtue however, *should* have been denominated self-renunciation rather than self-gratification, is indeed one of those significant facts embedded in language, which reveals the character of past ages. Men's self has been selfishness; else had not self needed to be denied. Had they been better than they have been, had their prevailing desires been high and pure, then self-gratification had been their law and welfare.

But still I must say that the pursuit of virtue *in its aim*, runs wide of what has been called the universal passion — the love of happiness. That is to say, it is altogether a distinct thing. It is as different from the love of happiness and as much higher, as the delight of giving food to a famishing man, is higher than the pleasure of tasting it ourselves. And if the love of

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the right is a distinct thing, it may be a motive by itself; and if it is a greater thing, then it may be a more powerful motive than the other. Let the love of happiness be a motive to virtue, but it is not the highest. No, my brethren, it is no over-refinement, though utilitarians maintain it is, to say that virtue must be sought for its own sake; and especially that the highest deed of virtue is always done for its own sake: it is a simple fact. It is a fact which every good man's consciousness gives him. The righteous man will do the thing that is right, *because* it is right: he does not pause upon any paltry calculations about advantage. When I say *paltry* calculations, I am sensible that I speak his feeling, in his noblest frames of mind, rather than the strict truth. The advantage, the interest, the happiness is indeed a great thing; but great as it is, it is not the good man's greatest thought nor highest motive. In the lower ranges of virtue indeed, in struggling out from intemperance, or licentiousness or a life of fraud, a man may think much of the evils they have brought upon him, or will bring upon him. The fear of hell is better than no motive for escaping from evil; but as a man rises, he will come to hate all evil and to love all goodness for themselves.

But I am not content with asserting the lofty principle I contend for, merely as a matter of speculative truth; I appeal more distinctly to experience. *Is* he really a *good* man — is he a good man, at *all*, who gives alms, or makes prayers, to be seen of men? Our Master, on the contrary, pronounces him to be a hypocrite. But I speak to the true man's own *experience*, and I say — when a good man does a good action, is he always, I might almost say, is he ever, thinking of the happiness it will yield him? It is very

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proper, no doubt, to vindicate the place which happiness has in the theory of virtue; but in the practice I think the love of it has very little place. When a generous man is spreading around him the gifts which Heaven's beneficence has poured upon him, he is *not* all the while, thinking of the returns of profit or praise. The true patriot is not thinking of the fame he will reap; but of the country he would save. Nay, it is when the tide of battle turns against him, and darkness and disaster hang upon his standard — in the cloud and the storm, unseen, alone — in the thick battle — that he flings himself upon the altar of his great sacrifice, to die! "It is beautiful," says an ancient sentence, "to die for our country:" and all the ages give echo to it; but had it said "profitable," that sentence had never been repeated. And to descend to the humbler scenes of domestic life; what is it that carries many a one around us, through all the unnumbered steps of maternal care and watching? Is it the mother's expectation that her children will one day repay her? Nay, if there be a stricken one, in that little flock, one that through long and lingering disease, must die — can do nothing for her, but must die — upon that weak and drooping head, upon that pained and complaining brow, does she not pour out her love without measure?

Indeed the disinterestedness of all the loftier human affections and pursuits, is in direct contradiction to what is often alleged concerning the utter selfishness of the world. The artist labors to embody his idea of beauty on the canvas, or in marble or in music — between lonely walls he labors, often forgetting the world that is without: the poet, the author, retires to the still haunts of meditation, and weaves the unbought colors of his imagination into pictures that beguile the steal-

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ing hours; the eloquent man pours forth his soul in the unrestrained tide of speech; and if either of them could think in the great hour and access of inspiration, of a price for it, though that price were fame, *that* thought would strike the very energy of genius with the palsy of death.

This, my brethren, is the loftiness of virtue. This is the loftiness of our Christian teaching. This is the glory of him, who endured the cross, and despised the shame, for the salvation of the world. "Shall not a good man then," I may be asked, "have respect to the recompense of reward;" even as Moses is said to have had respect unto it? He shall indeed. But what *is* that recompense? It is not mere escape from hell. It is not heaven even, as a place of refuge or security. It is not mere happiness — no, not infinite and everlasting happiness alone. A higher thought than this, enters into that recompense of reward. It is the right, that a noble mind seeks; it is the true, the just, the holy and pure; it is disinterestedness; it is sanctity; it is something far better than happiness. "Oh! heaven," I hear some one sigh, "I wish I could be *happy:* I think, *I* should be content with *that*." Would you be content to be happy without any regard to what made you so? Alas! then your spirit is broken by the cares and sorrows of life, or you have never risen to the lofty range of virtue. Rectitude does indeed confer the true happiness, but it is not happiness that gives it its beauty and grandeur. Happiness compared with rectitude, is but as a beggar at the door of a prince. Virtue is the only princely thing upon earth.

I have thus laid before you what I understand to be the essential basis of true rectitude. Other things may help to build it up, circumstances, customs, worships, motives of interest; but this is the foundation — the

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love of the right for its own sake. I may now be asked — of what use is this view of the subject? This question I shall attempt to answer.

I say then, that the point in hand touches first, the matter of happiness itself: secondly, the solution of the grand problem of life; and thirdly, the essential worth and dignity of virtue.

First, the matter of happiness itself. I have come to entertain the opinion, my friends, that with reference to *being happy*, we think too much of it, and too little of being right and pure. We come forward into life demanding happiness, and portraying to ourselves many a fairy scene, where it is to be enjoyed. There is indeed, a *beau ideal* of earthly felicity in many minds, which, I doubt, whether it is good for them. There is a worldly dreaming about happiness, which can never be realized. Many are expecting from every quarter — from friendship, from domestic life, from property, from honor, a more unalloyed good than they will ever receive. Their disappointment in life, is proportioned to their expectations; and this world is shaded and saddened to their vision, because they did not see it as what it is, and perhaps inevitably is — a system of moral development, necessarily attended with much, very much trial. At any rate, I do not see it to be the design of the divine providence, so much to make us immediately happy, as to train us, through suffering often, for a diviner good. I see that mere enjoyment, in the divine plan, is often sacrificed to that higher end. I see moreover, that this higher thing, this immortal good within me, is the only thing upon which I can lay any sure grasp and make certain. Now I say, if each of us could thus look upon life; if we could see that all things on earth but virtue, were made and meant to hang loosely upon us, and to flutter

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about us in every breeze; that pleasures, fortunes, honors, ay, empires, thrones swing round this all-comprehending, central good; that as the poor student, when he looks upon his plain apparel or scanty fare, says, "it is no matter, so long as I get learning," so if *we* could say of the greater learning, "let me be poor or neglected, it is no matter so long as I get wisdom, truth, purity;" I believe we should not only be better for this view of things, but happier too. This philosophy of life is grounded in our very nature; in the essential difference between substance and show, between the mortal and immortal. It is but the great Christian paradox, that when we are humblest, we are most exalted; that when we lose our life for virtue, we gain a nobler life; that when we think most for others, we do the most for ourselves; that when we are the most bound to duty, our mind is freest for enjoyment.

And this state of mind, I now say in the second place, furnishes the true, practical solution of the greatest problem in human life,—the problem of evil. If we are always thinking of happiness, as the first and main thing; if we are always asking that, and that alone, and that every instant, I see not how we are to get along with the trials and questionings of our minds in the constant experience of life. It requires a hardier reasoner to meet this great life-argument. It requires one who can see the grandeur of sanctity, the sovereignty of virtue—can see that it sits as king, and every thing should bow to it, ay, and every thing be sacrificed for loyalty to it. It requires one who can say, when unlawful resources are offered even to the lawful passions, "it is written that man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word of God;" who when all the kingdoms of this world are spread before him, to seduce him from his allegiance to heaven, can say

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"get thee behind me, Satan; for it is written, thou shalt worship the Lord thy God, and him only shalt thou serve." Yes, it requires a vision like that of Jesus, to look through the otherwise dark mystery of life. It *must* be a dark mystery forever, to sensuality, to the love of ease, to the mere love of happiness. But to the high and sacred intent of virtue, it is not a mystery, though there be things that are mysterious in it; yet in its main purpose and character, life is not a mystery. It is a salvation to be wrought out; it is a battle to be won; it is a crown of glory, to be wrested from the grasp of difficulty and from the edge of peril, and to be brightened if need be in the fires of martyrdom. Life itself, according to the Christian teaching, is not to be held dear in comparison with virtue; and surely not therefore, the ease and pleasure of life. The world, according to that teaching, is the field of a great and solemn conflict; light and darkness struggle together upon this field; storm and shadow and sunlight hurry over it in quick succession; blows and wounds and deaths fall on every side; and the battle-cry here, must not be—"ease! ease!—happiness! happiness!"—but, "courage! virtue! victory!" *This* is the cry that must animate, *this* the principle that must sustain us.

Let me now proceed to speak, lastly, of the dignity of this principle, and of the place which this consideration of it has in our life, both private and national.

In a world whose action, if not whose sentiment, is so much circumscribed by the pursuits of gain and pleasure, it is of no small importance to press this consideration of the dignity of virtue. There is a sentiment, even in a worldly life, that goes beyond the visible scene, and I acknowledge it; but the action is too apt to engross and narrow and degrade us. We

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are liable to fall into a low and mean way of thinking in all our pursuits; as if the pence-table and the counter and the warehouse, or as if office or éclat, or as if to take our place in the social sphere, were not merely the means to something, but were the very end of life.

Therefore it is, that upon the peaceful scene of prosperity and luxury, often breaks the thunder of calamity. So it has ever been in the providence of God, whether dealing with the life of men or of nations. Amidst the wrecks of friendship, fame and fortune, we are taught that enjoyment is not the chief end of life; that there is something better than to sit down in quiescence and security; that fortitude is dearer gain than fortune; that heroism is nobler than honor; and that friendship itself, the dearest of all earthly boons, even *that* can be foregone, for the high sanctity of principle. And therefore it is, that even in the desolations of war, the optimist finds something to relieve the dark picture. War, dread evil as it is, and a most awful accumulation of evils, is not the worst thing in the world. There may be a state of peaceful and prosperous life, of what is called civilized life, that is worse than war. The sword does not wound the interests of humanity so deeply, as the unscrupulous selfishness and sensuality that cut all the bonds of human society. And if modern civilization cannot raise mankind above such degradation, there will be war again and again.

Men think much and say much in these days — and it is well they should — of the horrors of war; the bare rumor of its approach fills us with agitation; but there is a danger that comes without herald or rumor. It steals upon a people in low maxims, debasing aims, corrupting pleasures. If we do not keep high among us the standard of rectitude, the dignity of personal character: if we let down our mark to mere lucre, to

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mere success and mean bargaining for it: if the old, the pristine virtues become but shows and shams, and only *pleasures* are real: if money buys every thing, and even offices and honors are at auction, and the national character sinks in the boundless scramble of private aim and public ambition, this very country may arrive at a condition that is worse than war. Yes, and from the darkest annals of war, I can draw better things to contemplate, than from the luxuries and indulgences of boundless opulence, or the abuses of vaunted freedom. Better than the enervated Sybarite or the unprincipled politician, were it to be Regulus; better to go back and die in Carthage, than to live amidst the favors and flatteries of Rome. Better to be the noble Arnold von Winkelried, of the Swiss Underwalden, who, when the fixed and serried lances of the Austrian army were before him at the battle of Sempach, and there seemed no way to break through them, turned to his people, saying, "I will make a way for you; faithful, dear confederates, think of my family!" — then rushed upon the opposing phalanx, and took their lances into his very bosom, and died to give his people freedom.

This was the martyrdom of virtue: and better it is to die for the right, than to live for aught else. All beside — soft clothing, ye may have, that makes the body delicate and the nerves to shrink from pain; palace-roofs ye may raise, and soft couches ye may spread beneath, and silken draperies may veil your windows from the glare of day; no tent-curtains around *you*, flapping in the night-wind; no ragged walls of ghastly catacombs, like those to which the early Christians fled for refuge; no persecutor's sword, flashing through the torch-lit gloom of noisome dungeons: but if, while luxury and splendor increase, all

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high and stern principle, social and political, shall die away, better were it, that the sword of a Decian persecution or of a Gothic invasion, should strike in, and cut the bonds of effeminate softness, and break the spell of ever-complying sophistry and worldliness. O venerable to me — to all men, venerable forever, are the dwellings, where amidst peril and terror and the inquisition for blood, where in darkness and silence, men and women have kneeled before the altars of Christ, and have said "let us die, but let us not deny thee. Denial — betrayal — no, never! Come rather the sacrifice of blood!" Holy names of Polycarp and Servetus and Cranmer! where in our days of peace and prosperity, shall such names be found?

But I must not leave it to be supposed that the high and sacred adherence to truth and right, can find no place but in scenes of war and persecution. Everywhere and every day that great principle is demanded. Every man and thing that approaches you, may ask you to swerve. Among "the pleasures of sin," spoken of in the text, are the pleasures of praise, popularity and influence. To these especially Moses stood superior, when he cast in his lot with a despised people and a despised religion. If thou wouldst imitate him, then stand up openly and firmly for thy principle, be it in religion or politics or social right. If when the occasion demands this, thou dost, for the good opinion of men or for office or for gain, hold back or conceal or equivocate, thou art, before the altar of God and conscience, a dishonored man. If thou hast a feeling for humanity, for the sometimes despised multitude, for the equal rights and interests of all men, a feeling which all noble spirits have, utter it; and let no brow of pride or privilege, in this country or any other country, awe thee down. In all

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situations and places, amidst the gayeties and hypocrisies of fashion, in thy drawing-room when thou talkest with thine acquaintance, speak, if thou speakest at all, the thought that is in thee; speak what thou meanest; let a noble and fearless simplicity take the place of heartless acquiescence and innuendo; keep thy naturalness and truth amidst the miserable sophistries and affectations of society. For know that in these scenes, thou mayest as really swerve from thine integrity, as if thou hadst stood before the image of Nebuchadnezzar or of Trajan, and forsworn thy religion. Life is forever deceiving us by the appearance of what is little and trivial, when in reality the deepest principles are involved. The idlest walk you take, to-day or to-morrow, may be tracked all over with the steps of moral cowardice and base desertion of the truth. Yes, as you walk through a gay city-street or a village-street, you may by flattering homages to some, or by cold neglect or patronizing contempt to others, utterly compromise all the loftiness and dignity of your mind. In that gallery of living pictures there is many a one, that presents the unlovely and odious features of worldly pride and vanity; and I deem it not too solemn to say, that many a false word uttered there, shall be called into judgment.

To these few thoughts upon the dignity, the nobleness of the holy and right principle, let me add one further consideration. In the bosom of the deepest trouble that principle may live; and it is the only sustaining and comforting principle that can live there. Surrounded as we all are liable to be at times, with the darkest cloud of fears and anxieties and sorrows, is it not something, to know that the light of life, the great stay and strength of our being, may still be within us? It is my lot, not very unfrequently, to meet with per-

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sons, in their weary and sorrowing walk through life, to whom this is all I can say. I am obliged to say, "you cannot be happy now, but strive to be right. Joyousness is gone from you, I know, but think of nobleness. Man has failed, but think of God. Oh! to be consecrate, patient, true, is still left to you. Happiness you cannot have now; but you may have blessedness."

Is it not to this very condition, that the grandeur of Christ's example addresses itself? The bright, immortal seal of sanctity, was to be set in the dark mould of earthly calamity and affliction. The beauty, the majesty of a holy soul was to shine out, like a seraphic countenance, from overshadowing griefs and pains. He could have ascended a throne, but he refused it. He might have had twelve legions of angels to help him; but he did not ask for them. The Father might have sent him rescue; but no — not for this did he come. No, but to show, amidst sorrow and desertion and rejection and crucifixion, and all that men call defeat and ignominy, the grandeur of a power and sacrifice, to lift our poor, despairing and sin-burthened humanity to cheering courage and heavenly bliss. "Be of good cheer," he says amidst it all; "in the world ye shall have tribulation: but be of good cheer: I have overcome the world." How remarkable is his language in this respect! How touchingly, how gloriously contrasted with the circumstances of his life, was the language of his spirit! Encompassed all round with trouble, he says — ay, to the disciples of sorrow and persecution, he says, "Peace I leave with you; *my* peace I give unto you; not as the world giveth, give I unto you." Amidst a life of want and wandering, of denial and desertion, he says, "Come unto me, all that labor and are heavy-laden, and I will give you rest." Amidst hunger and distress, poverty and privation, he

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says, "I have food to eat that ye know not of." Lord, evermore give us this bread! In all time of our trouble and affliction, in all time of our want and weariness and wandering, evermore give us this bread!

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XI.

ON PERFECTION.

Matt. v. 48. — "Be ye therefore perfect, as your Father in heaven is perfect."

The comparison here made, the standard set up, cannot fail I suppose, to suggest to every one, the necessity of sometimes receiving the words of Scripture, not in an absolute but in a qualified sense. This language literally understood would be chargeable with blasphemy. And if to be perfect as God is perfect, is impossible, so is any perfection that excludes all weakness, error, and defect.

What then is the meaning of this commandment? It is that we should strive for the highest excellence that *is* possible to us. It is especially that we should never in any case, intentionally or wilfully do what is wrong, nor ever indulge any wrong feeling. And then as to all the errors of inadvertence, haste and passion, which we cannot altogether prevent, it is that we should resist and check and remove them, as fast and as far as we can. It is, in short — and this is the practical point that I propose now to lay before you — that we should aim at the highest, and ever strive to reach it.

There are, doubtless, many hindrances to high attainment; but it is still more important to observe, that there are some obstacles even to a high aim, and which arise particularly from that erroneous interpreta-

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tion of the commandment to which I have adverted; from straining the interpretation up to a lofty ideal point of demand, a point so lofty that the practical aim cannot follow it. The Bible is supposed to require an impracticable perfection. The Law of the Old Testament and the requisition of the New, so far as that element of Law enters into it, are conceived, to demand absolute, sinless perfection. But this is impossible. Human infirmity does not admit of it. It is as much out of our reach, as a flight with angel wings up to the visible heavens. Now the obvious effect of demanding literally such an ascension, from any man as his duty, would be that he would do nothing at all.

And I say that such an interpretation of the commandment is wrong. All language is to be explained by the subject and the circumstances. Literally, man *cannot* be perfect as God is perfect; nor absolutely perfect in any way. Why then is it supposed to be demanded of him? Because, it is said, an infinitely holy God, could demand no less. But what *good* can it do to demand of men an impossible perfection? And the answer is; it is meant to humble them, and to show them the greatness of their sins.

But it is not easy to see how the consequence follows in either case. The potency of certain customary forms of expression is a very curious subject for the philosopher to investigate. That an infinitely holy Being for instance must require perfect holiness of his creatures; we might as well say that an infinitely powerful Being must require perfect strength of his creatures, or that an infinitely wise Being must require perfect wisdom, or that an infinitely intelligent Being must require perfect intelligence of his creatures. And then again, how it is that failing of an impracti-

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cable, impossible holiness, should humble any one, it must require a very strange kind of reasoning to show: so strange indeed that I do not believe, any man ever *was* truly humbled by it. No real, none but a factitious humility ever was produced in this way.

And now in fine, if you add to this popular construction of the commandment, as a mere ideal standard, the notion that men, in seeking their salvation, are to turn away from the bright and terrible law of purity, to the arms of a pitying, all-embracing mercy, it would be difficult, I think, to conceive of any system of interpretation, more completely fitted to neutralize the whole moral force of the Bible. A commandment, impracticable, and therefore not winning, not encouraging, not inspiring any effort after excellence, but only fitted to crush men down to despair and an imaginary humiliation: a mercy coming to their rescue from the hostile precept; not a co-ordinate power with the law but a protector from the law; saying to the sinner, "you *may* fall quite short of the high Bible rule; it is not to be expected that you will comply with it; that is not the law of salvation, but of condemnation; ignore, repudiate, pass by the strict and intolerable law, and cast yourself simply, solely, unconditionally upon the merit purchased for you, and all will be well;" this looks, I say, like a purposed and planned combination, though I know it is not so intended, to relax and let down the whole moral authority of the Scriptures. Much is said against the doctrine of the perfectionists; but in truth I must say that it seems to me better and safer than this. I know it is said that where this interpretation has prevailed, nations and societies have been singularly virtuous. That the negative, ascetic and merely strict virtues have flourished under such a system I do not deny. Mr. Layard tells us that the devil-wor-

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shippers of Armenia, are very virtuous; but that this is true of the high, heroical and generous virtues I do not see, nor believe. Nay, I have some doubt whether in any emergency of peril or suffering, in a shipwreck or a battle, as large an amount of generous and courageous self-sacrifice, would be found under this Antinomian, this Calvinistic culture, as under the promptings of ordinary and honorable sentiment.

At any rate I do regard this matter of which I have been speaking, as one of very serious application to the state of our modern, Christian society. If we look up to the highest purity which Jesus demands as something attainable, as something which we are bound to strive after, and in fact to reach, then we stand in a relation with it of encouragement, of hope and earnest effort, and of real humility for our failure. But if, on the contrary, the thing is too high for human reach, then it ceases to be a rule for us, we are content to sink far below it; with an ironical allusion perhaps, to the high, impracticable Christianity, we say that we are poor sinners who have no thought of being so good; the stings of self-reproach are exchanged for a certain idle trifling both about sin and holiness; and all the active moral forces that should be striving in the bosom of a Christian people, are struck with sad inefficiency or fatal paralysis. Now I seriously think and must venture to *say* that this is too much the state of all our religious communities. Is it not a natural consequence of the reasoning? What if in a school of learning, the high scholastic measure of attainment were regarded by the pupils as a mere ideal of excellence, laid down only to be looked at, not to be reached — only as a mere mockery of their powers of acquisition? What if the rule were, that they should master Geometry in three days, and Greek in a fortnight? Would

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they strive for it? Would they not sink into utter despondency, or easy indifference? The *Christian* school, alas! is full of easy, contented mediocrity. There is far too little in it, of high, heroical, self-denying effort after excellence. It is rare to see any mind, touched, inspired, with that great passion after goodness and purity, and the fixed will to obtain it. Many men, most men, I fear, are living on at ease, year after year, without one vigorous step of improvement. That which would not for a moment content the student, the seeker of fortune or fame, the lawyer, the physician, the politician, the soldier, contents many a man who calls himself a Christian. *What* contents him? Even to stand still; to advance to no higher grade; to have no more love and purity in his heart at the end of the year, no more command of his passions, of his worldliness, anger or sensuality, than he had at the beginning of the year.

But I trust that all this is seen to be wrong, and that the way is opened by what has been said, to enforce the precept of the text, "be ye perfect." As an Apostle exhorts, "whatsoever things are true, whatsoever things are honest, whatsoever things are just, whatsoever things are pure, whatsoever things are lovely, whatsoever things are of good report, if there be any virtue and if there be any praise, think on these things." Let us then, think on these things.

1. And in the first place, I say, that the perfection proposed to us, is both attainable and indispensable. That which we are commanded to do, we can do. What we are required to be, that we can be. And that we must be. That we must be, to be saved. Salvation — when shall we get rid of our miserable, technical ideas of it? — salvation *is* purity of heart and life. That is the single discrimination that cuts off all this

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evasion, shuffling, and laxity of principle. There is mercy as we believe, but no mercy that relaxes the bond of commandment. Only so good and holy as we are, only so happy shall we be, in this world or in any other world. Mercy encourages, helps us to be this; does not dispense with it. Nor do I believe that one iota of goodness or holiness will ever be ours, but by our voluntary embracing and cherishing of it. Death will not break this great and eternal bond. Happy as we are holy: holy as we voluntarily become so: this, I believe, is the law for this world and for every world.

2. But, it will be said, we cannot be holy to the extent required, in a moment or with a step: *that* impossibility in the case, at least, is undeniable. True; but we can set ourselves about it. We can do more than we do. We can be better than we are. The power to improve — who really and sincerely denies it? What mean all command, exhortation, remonstrance, reproach, but this? Neither does the true doctrine of the divine aid, hinder the inference. God helps us; in our conscience, in the very sense of what is divine and pure, and in every way needful to us, as I believe; but all this leaves the power to improve untouched and unquestionable.

Let us carry this a moment into detail. A man believes in God. And to the Infinite Goodness he feels that he ought to be grateful, and towards the Infinite Love, that he should be inspired with a reverent and devout affection. But these affections he does not feel as he ought, — as he would. Then I say he can cultivate them. He *can* think of the Infinite Goodness. He can pray. He can call to mind in the morning, the Almighty power by which he lives, and from time to time during the day, the sacred presence in which he lives; and he can associate with these, all the beauty

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of nature and the blessedness of life. To do all this, is an act of simple volition; and if he will sincerely and steadfastly seek to live in the Great Presence he can, he will; he will become a devout man; and he will live a diviner and more blessed life, than if all the worlds on high were his possessions.

Again, every man has some faults that are peculiarly his own. He is ambitious, covetous of fame or wealth, or envious or discontented, or he is impatient, hasty and given to bursts of anger; or he is liable to tell untruths, a cowardly prevaricator; or he is prone to indulge his senses and appetites too far. Or he may be guilty of all these; for alas! evil passions easily consort together, and dwell often in the same bosom. And most men are mainly content to remain as they are, and are more ready to cloak or to defend their faults, than to extirpate them. They have never heard the command, "be ye perfect." They have never seen that the command really applies to them. They have never felt the inspiring call to rise to the highest virtue and purity that they can. But I say, if a man feels the impulse and the desire to rise, he *can* rise. He can correct his faults. The common plea concerning his failures, that "he can't help it," is not true. He *can* help it. He can help it, just as the student can help being an ignorant and idle scholar. I say, he *can* help it. He does not know, he can hardly conceive what he may do, if he will try. He can begin right. Instead of defending his ambition or anger or untruth or sensuality, he can honestly and manfully say, "it is wrong." He can repent, and resolve to amend. He can think, every night, wherein he has failed or erred. He can bring that humbling thought into his morning prayer. I have heard a man plead that he does not know *how* to pray, when that duty is urged upon him.

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But let him think deeply of his own heart and life; and he will know how to pray, and he will not know how to help it. Let him every morning, I say, in the consciousness of yesterday's errors, pray to God that he may that day learn to command his passions, to control his tendencies to evil, "to lay aside the sins that most easily beset him;" and that in all things, he may be more wise, calm, gentle, true, and pure. And not as if his morning's prayer finished his day's religion; but let him strive to *do* and to *be* all this. And not leaving all defenceless and neglected, like a careless idler in the great work of life, let him set guards around him, and charge his heart to be faithful and true. Let him but look upon his life's true work, as the student upon his science or the merchant upon his gains; as if additions and successive steps belonged to it, and it were nothing without them; or like the noble Roman of old, let him count the day in which no good deed is done, no advance made, as a day lost. Let every day of the year be such, and what results might it not witness! Three hundred and sixty-five days, each and every one, — each and every one, consecrated to self-knowledge and progress — what might they not do? Three hundred and sixty-five days! ay, count them and consider them; and say, what might they not do? Ah! what years were these to put into the record of life! But now, alas! with too many of us, the sun rises and sets upon our sloth; and the year opens and closes upon our idleness and inaction!

3. But we can advance — this is what I have been saying — and now I add, that we can rise *high*.

We hear much of human weakness. It is the perpetual theme of the pulpit. It is men's constant apology for their negligence, nay, and for their faults, I am afraid, and even for their vices. We hear much

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of human weakness. I wish we could hear something of human strength. We hear much of what man can't do; I wish we might hear something of what he can do. I wish we could understand and believe something, of the power that God has given us to overcome evil, and to rise to "glory and virtue." Yes, to "glory and virtue:" for to these, saith holy Scripture, God has called us. Nor let the suggestion, *that we can do nothing* WITHOUT *God*, break the force of the exhortation. It was never meant to lessen our exertion nor to derogate from our own proper efficiency. All human power—reason, conscience, will—is given and ever sustained by God; and His spirit, the breath divine in our souls, may help us in ways that we do not understand. Let all this be humbly and gratefully admitted. All the reservation that I make, is for that free *use* of the God-given power, which is and must be our own. And it is the amount of this reservation, it is the strength that lies *there*, that needs a new consideration among us: for our attention has been turned all the other way. Yes, the strength that lies *there*, in the human will and effort—let it not offend you if I say, that it is the stronghold of human hope. For what is the ground of our fear concerning any man; of our fear that he will not be a Christian; that he will not come out well; that he will fail in the great life-trial? It is not that God's power and mercy will fail to him, but that he will fail to himself. It is personal neglect alone that will ruin any man; it is personal fidelity only that can save him.

And that fidelity, the strength that lies in single-hearted resolve—what may it not do? What else has carried men to the loftiest heights of virtue? What is it, that distinguishes the noblest Christian man from him that is so weak and wavering that he scarce de-

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serves the name of Christian? What but resolving, striving, laboring, praying, to be good and pure?

In the *general* field of human life and history, what is the striking fact that draws our attention? Human strength, energy, activity. It tills all fields, and ploughs the ocean wave. It builds manufactories; it opens highways over plains and mountains and rivers. It achieves wonders in art and science and literature. It stirs in the bosom of nations, and wields the power that rules over them. This powerful energy, that is working all over the world — why does it not enter into the field of our religious culture? Because, as one reason, because the very guardians of that field, stand before it and say to all human energy, "you can do nothing here." What a lamentable mistake! This field is open to all. All cannot be artists or authors or statesmen. But all can be more than what the world calls great: they can be good; yes, and in that they can be great.

Not to dwell upon this matter abstractly, let me give an instance or two, of deeds more illustrative, than any words I can use. The name of Oberlin, the celebrated pastor of the Ban-de-la-Roche in Alsace, is known to us all. Oberlin's story is fame. But there was a humble servant of Oberlin, of whom, perhaps, we have not heard; yet the Continent of Europe at one time, heard of her; the Academy of the French Institute, decreed to her the prize annually awarded to virtuous actions; and the celebrated Cuvier drew up the Report of the Academy, giving a recital of her virtues. Perhaps I cannot do better than to read the statement he made, in his own words. "A young female peasant," he says, "of one of these villages (i.e. of the Ban-de-la-Roche,) Louisa Schepler, hardly fifteen years of age, was so struck with the virtues

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of this man of God, (Oberlin) that although she enjoyed a small patrimony, she asked leave to enter his service and to take part in his charitable labors. From that time, without receiving any salary, she never left him. As his aid, his messenger, she carried to every cottage, all kinds of consolation. Never was better exemplified the influence of the heart in enlarging the understanding. Drawn by the heart to the holy pastor, she understood him, and often astonished him with happy suggestions, and especially with that of an infant-school, for the children of the poor peasants. The honor," says Baron Cuvier, "of an idea which has already been so fruitful, and which will soon be adopted everywhere, is due to Louisa Schepler — to this poor peasant of Bellefosse. In old age she still instructed these children, a hundred in number; but this, in which she had assistant teachers, was only a part of her sphere; she was abroad among the mountain cottages, encountering deep snows, cold winds, and torrents swollen with heavy rains: and when she returned, fatigued, wet and pierced with cold, to Oberlin's home, her affectionate attention was still extended to all around her." "What care and watching," says one, "when Oberlin or any member of the family was sick!" "I know not, says Baron Cuvier, whether Louisa Schepler is acquainted with the action of the Academy in decreeing to her this token of its admiration; but all who know her, know the use to which she will put it." And so it was; she spent the sum, five thousand francs, which was presented to her by the Academy, in those acts of charity and love, to which her life was devoted.

Let me take another instance from the opposite sphere of life — that of the crowded and luxurious city, to show what he may do, who will. I think it was

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about forty years ago, that an aged gentleman was living in the city of London, in wealth and ease, derived from the produce of his estates in the Island of Barbadoes. Some facts came to his knowledge, that led him to suspect that his slaves were cruelly treated. At the age of eighty, he left his luxurious home and crossed the ocean to examine for himself. He dwelt among his people for ten years. He took a fatherly care of them; he improved their condition and character; he prepared them for freedom; and dying at the age of ninety, he left them with a copyhold of his estates. Well might the Edinburgh Review say, "we take shame to ourselves, that while we have been occupied with the deeds of kings and conquerors, we have never heard till now, of the name of JOSHUA STEELE!"

Yes, of heroes and hero-worship we hear much. But there is a spiritual heroism, little known; that of the man who resolves to conquer himself — hardest of all conquests. Impatience, envy, rage, selfishness eager for success or sullen at defeat, passions of the flesh, and passions of the spirit — these are his enemies. In the silent depths of the heart, he fights his battle. Nor trumpet nor clarion lifts its voice upon the air, to tell of his conflict or of his victory. What he does and what he suffers, no man knoweth: God only knows. Not on one bloody day does he fight, — at Waterloo or Yorktown — and win fame forever; but all through his life does he wage the war, and wins no fame. Not to lift himself to honor, but to forget himself, to still the throbs of self-conscious disquiet and all selfish passion — this is his endeavor. In the midnight and in the morning, in the throng and in the silent hour, ever is it his holy care and prayer, to keep all right within him, to keep all just and true, to keep

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all pure. Loneliness and neglect and sorrow may be upon his path, even as they were upon the path of Christ; but still he takes up the blessed cross, and follows the divine Master; amidst foes without and fightings within, amidst selfish pleas for ease, and treacherous passions and worldly allurements, he presses on "towards the mark—for the prize of the high calling of God, in Christ Jesus."

The world knoweth it not; but there is no such nobleness in the world as that. And when the true man's work is done; when the last hour is spreading its solemn shadow around, and the last conflict with mortal infirmity is passing; then shall he say with the noble Apostle, "I have fought a good fight, I have finished my course, I have kept the faith, henceforth there is laid up for me a crown of righteousness which the Lord, the righteous Judge will give me in that day: and not to me only," he adds, for the encouragement of every humble disciple, for the encouragement of every one of *us*, "and not to me only, but to every one that loves his appearing."

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XII.

HUMANITY, AND THE GOSPEL DEMAND UPON IT.

MARK X. 17-21. — "And when he was gone forth into the way, there came one running, and kneeled to him, and asked him, Good Master, what shall I do that I may inherit eternal life? And Jesus said unto him, Thou knowest the commandments: Do not commit adultery; Do not kill; Do not steal; Do not bear false witness, Defraud not, Honor thy father and mother. And he answered and said to him, All these have I observed from my youth. Then Jesus beholding him loved him; and said unto him, One thing thou lackest."

WHY did Jesus love him? He was not a disciple; he was not a Christian; he was not a follower of the Master. He was invited to be, but he refused. And yet there was something lovely in him. What was it? According to the prevailing views of religion, he was unregenerate; i.e. a totally depraved being. He had only the virtues of our common humanity — such at least as are often found in it, and especially in its youth — freedom from base vices, integrity, honesty, obedience to parents. What was it then? In short, what *had* he, and what did he *lack?*

These are the questions which I propose to consider in this discourse; in other words, what humanity is, in its best natural affections, and what is the Gospel demand upon it. And I say at once, and at the outset, that I mean to speak a word *for our humanity*, for this great brotherhood of men: while I shall not fail, at the same time, to speak as distinctly of what is required of it. And I shall do the first, because I think that all

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those views of our common human kind, whether found in theology or philosophy, which brand it with shame and dishonor, which represent men as a poor, debased and wretched race of creatures — that all such views are not only wrong, but hurtful, making us less kind, considerate, friendly and affectionate with one another. But when I come to speak of the Gospel demand, I shall say that it is great; it is high; the Gospel requires a step, clear, distinct and momentous beyond natural and spontaneous sentiment; but the demand is made, not in any scorn of man, not in any injustice to him, not in derogation from any excellence or charm or worth that belongs to him.

There is then, a *respect for humanity*, a *sympathy* with it, a *tenderness*, an *affection* for it — indicated, I conceive, by our Saviour's treatment of the young man, in the Gospel — which have had too little place in our pulpits. I say in our pulpits; for the world will love what is lovely, without asking leave of the pulpit. It is in our religious teaching, that this recognition is wanting. It avails not for us to have rejected certain statements of human depravity. Doctrines spread their influence far beyond the profession of them, and live in public sentiment, long after they have died out of the creed; and I firmly believe that none of our pulpits do justice to the kindly, tender, solemn and stupendous nature that God has given us; that here is a thing created, this human soul, this humanity within us, which no creed, no preaching appreciates.

Humanity, I say; and let us look at it, for a few moments, and try to see it as it is. Humanity, I say; and if I had space for so large a discussion, I would fain look at it in its depths; for I believe that there are depths in it, that lie far down beneath sensation, beneath selfishness, beneath all worldly passion; but

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let us look at it, in its palpable and unquestioned aspects, in what we all know it to be.

Humanity, I repeat — what a story is there to tell of it! What moving fortunes, what sacred emergencies, what experiences never unveiled, what sorrow and sacrifice, enter into a human life! Must we be harsh and hard with it, because we speak from the pulpit? Look at it, I say. Take any family history — from birth to death, from marriage to burial, from fresh young life to venerable old age — dare we, in the name of religion, smite it with desecrating scorn?

Marriage, the central, primal bond, is it an unholy bond? "To love and to cherish, till death us do part;" are those idle words, or words of low or evil import? No; God made that bond. Tell me not of worldly convenience or interest in the matter. These belong to certain (so called) fashionable, exceptional states or classes of society. It is not the common ordinance of sacred wedlock. No; a sense of duty, thoughts of honor and fidelity, a plighted troth, a bond from which *death* only shall take the seal — these things solemnize the hour and foreshadow the future.

That future draws on; those scenes arise, and become realities. Children are born. "Can a mother forget?" The daily care and nightly watch of all her fresh and vigorous years — that love of hers that never dies or declines — testifies, that she does not forget. Doth the father not care? He toils and labors, he wears himself out in business or study, with constant thought of that sacred home. How often does a man think — "if I could get through this business, by which I might make a provision for my family, I could die more content. Should it be my fate to perish on the wreck of car or ship on which I travel to secure this object, my last thought will be one of comfort that

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I have made this provision." Is it not something remarkable? He is, in his thought, leaving this world; he is going out into the spiritual realm; his own personal, immortal interest lies all beyond; and yet do his thoughts hover and cling about those he leaves on earth.

But the inevitable hour draws on, that is to close the mortal scene. Children die. Of their guardian parents, one is taken, and the other left. There is mourning in the household. Who shall dare to call it a base and selfish mourning? "Let us go and die with him!" is the cry of nature. And "the dead, the loved, the lost" — they are not dead to memory, to affection. We love them; we cherish them; we build their monuments; we mind their wishes, more than aught on earth. Is it not a sacred and disinterested affection? They can do nothing for us now, or nothing but aid our virtue. Yet we linger about the very shadow of their memory, as we never do about any coffer of gold or crown of honor.

But another scene arises. The family is broken and scattered — is "minished and brought low;" the young have wandered into life, to build new families; some relicts, perhaps, linger on into old age. Do the young treat them with coldness and neglect? If any one is so heartless and base, the instance is rare; and all human sentiment and feeling unite to strike it with an opprobrium, scarce short of infamy. But how rare, I repeat, is the instance! How has it been the usage of all generations, rude or civilized, as they come up into the world, to watch with filial care and piety, around the steps of those who are soon to part from it and pass away! And how often is a youth, ay a child of twelve or fourteen, made sober and thoughtful and industrious, by the need or illness of a venerated parent — of a

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mother perhaps, left alone in the world but for him! He watches her look; he regards her lightest wish, but above all, her greatest wish — that he be worthy of her, an honor to her and himself. He will do nothing to wound her. He will yield to no baseness, were it only for her sake. He will live so, that she shall be proud and glad in him. He will buckle on the armor of manhood, to shield that gentle and venerated form.

But now, at length, the aged have all passed away; and a new generation stands upon the earth, filling the vacant places. Look around upon it; and what do you see? The base and the bad, the mean, treacherous and dishonest? Yes, they are there; but are these all? Evil is there — dishonesty, desertion of all holy trusts, dishonor to households and homes. But is that all that you see? Nay, how do the sympathies of society rush to the rescue! How, by one man's erring, are hundreds touched with sorrow and pity! Yes, bad men are there, but good men too. Men of business are there, to whom the cheat or the lie is as much out of the question, is as impossible, as self-murder. Do they spend their gains meanly, upon their vices, or upon their pleasures alone? No, they support their families, provide for their children, give to the poor, erect hospitals and asylums, endow colleges, build churches. Do the pious alone build churches? No, the world, the wicked world builds them, more than anybody else does it. I am sure it is a very patient world, to bear as it does, the load of religious opprobrium, that is laid upon it. Rather, it is a very unbelieving world. It does not believe in the justice of this sacerdotal opprobrium. It does not accept the character which ecclesiastics give it: if it did, it would do nothing for churches.

As I look around upon my fellow-men, I cannot bear

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this desecration which theology and cynic criticism heap upon them. I am almost oppressed, sometimes, with the charm and beauty of society. There are so many good people in it; not what the preacher calls *Christians*, not half of them that so win my regard. Go where I will, East or West, North or South, there are so many good people; so many women, nay *all*, I had nearly said, of sacred purity, with tearful eye and open hand, to help the needy, the neglected and suffering; so many pure-hearted and generous men, too modest to call themselves Christians.

Do you imagine, that these good people are found only in polished, or in civilized society? Let me relate to you an anecdote of what took place, a few years ago, in the city of Batavia on the Island of Java: my informant knew the persons and the facts. A gentleman, a European and stranger, was taken ill of an epidemic fever that was raging in that city; he was lying helpless and certain to die, if left in that condition. A Malay man from the mountain, ay, a heathen man, chanced to pass by and saw him; and like the good Samaritan, had compassion on him; he caused him to be conveyed to his boat on the river; he took him up to his mountain-home; he built for him a hut of the bamboo cane, (it was done in a few hours;) he placed two aged women with him, to nurse and take care of him; they watched by his couch till the fever left him; and when he rose from that couch, tended by heathen strangers, and walked abroad in the village, pale and trembling, but with the joy of returning health, all the people, my informant said, testified the warmest sympathy with the benevolent deed that had saved him, and showed him the utmost kindness. And these were heathens; such heathens as the Burmese, to one of whom Missionary Judson said — and I will not mention him,

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without expressing my reverence for his spirit of self-sacrifice; *he* was a Christian, whatever his teachings were — to one of whom Dr. Judson said, "your acquaintance" (naming him) "is dead; his soul is lost, I think." "Why so?" was the reply. "He was not a disciple of Christ." "And so all who are not disciples of Christ, are lost?" "Yes, all" said Dr. Judson, "whether Burmese or foreigners." "It is hard," said the poor Burman, thinking, doubtless, of his countrymen, who had never heard of Christ. Yes, it was hard; far harder, I judge, than the Gospel, which declares that "in every nation, he that feareth God and worketh righteousness, shall be accepted of Him." And such, doubtless, were some of the Burmese and Malays; of the latter of whom we have heard that they are very treacherous and cruel, but *these* Malays were good people. And there are good people everywhere. And there is good — amidst all the evil and the wrong — there is good in human nature.

I have been endeavoring to look at it, as it is; to look upon men as they are; as we *know* that they are; and in accordance, as I believe with the spirit of our Master, manifested towards the young man in the Gospel, I love these kindly and noble offices of life and traits of humanity. I love my kind, and I will make no meanly qualifying apology for saying so, because I say it in the pulpit. I love this precious humanity, its tenderness, pity, and sorrow. Is it not a strange thing to look at? Out of that festering mass of guilt and sin, which humanity is represented to be, come these kind, supporting arms that tend the sick, that pillow the aching head, that bear offerings to the poor and needy — come these sweet and winning smiles and gentle and loving tones and fragrant breathings of affection that brighten the day and embalm the air of

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the world — come these blessed ties of friendship and home, that bind us in chains of holy thraldom. And who are the great and recognized expounders of what humanity is? Is it not a strange thing again? The great world-expounders of what humanity is, are the men of a divine genius — such as Plato, Cicero, Dante, Spenser, Milton, Shakspeare. And what have they said? The train of historic biography, has passed before them, and they have celebrated its beauty and grandeur. With glowing admiration, with tears for heroic suffering, with outpoured eulogy upon the great and wise, in glorious song or epic story, they have portrayed truth, justice, gentleness, love, honor, self-sacrifice, patriotism, philanthropy; and they have portrayed them as belonging to humanity; not as the self-elected virtue that said, "I only am right," but as human virtue. Were they right, or were they wrong? All the world has pronounced that they were right. "Yes," some one may say, "the blind profane world, judging in its own case?" Are not "the elect" of theology too, judges in their own case? Who are *likely* to be right? The one thousand, say rather the ten thousand of men, or the one? Which, I say, is to be relied on; the universal conscience, or the Calvinistic dogma? But now, does humanity say, or do its great expounders say, that all in man, is pure and good; that there is no baseness, selfishness, cruelty, impiety in him? No; but they say that there is *something* pure and good in man, something right, something to be esteemed and loved, in his very nature. And they appeal to him, by the very consciousness of that right and good, without which no rational appeal *could* be made to him, to rise higher; ay, to be regenerated from all evil, and to rise to all good.

And in all this, they do not differ from the great Teacher. Let us listen to him.

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A young man approaches him, and touched by the beauty of his teaching, kneels at his feet, and says, "good Master, what shall I do that I may inherit eternal life?" Jesus answers, thou knowest the commandments, and briefly reminds him of them. All these, he answers, I have kept from my youth. The Master does not say — "no, you have kept nothing; you have done nothing; you *are* nothing but depravity and guilt." On the contrary, he looks on him with affection and tenderness. He looks on him and loves him. He seems to say, "so far is well; but one thing thou lackest; go thy way, sell whatsoever thou hast, and give to the poor; and thou shalt have treasure in heaven; and come, take up the cross and follow me." That is — translated into a general principle, applicable to all times and circumstances — cast off all hindrances; break away from every passion, habit, indulgence that would hinder you, and take the great, all-surrendering resolution to follow conscience and the right, to obey God and his law, and so to be my disciple.

This is momentous teaching; and I now come to consider, in the second place, what it is that the Gospel demands of humanity. This, I say, is momentous teaching. It was so then; it is so now. There is a point in human experience, that is more important than any other — than any other that *can be*, in time or in eternity. There is a point that is more fundamental and final to the character, more vital in its influence, more decisive in its bearing on our future destiny, than any other. There is a point, without passing which, no man can be satisfactorily happy; and which once irrevocably passed, sets the whole course of a man's being towards all the happiness, virtue and glory, for which being is given. It is the point where a man resolves to forsake every thing wrong. It is the hour

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and the era of a fixed and unalterable decision to be a good man, to be a righteous man, to be more than in name, in very deed to be a Christian; to enthrone conscience in the soul, to be the servant of a higher law than will or appetite, or selfish interest. It is the hour when a man says, "I have done wrong, but I will do so no more. I will break off from every known sin. I *will do right;* come loss, come reproach, come death, come whatever will; this one thing, this only, will I do."

This, my brethren, is repentance; this is conversion; this is regeneration. This is the momentous epoch in human experience, passing through which, a man is "born again." For I do not understand by regeneration, the putting of something into the heart, which was in no sense or degree there before; conscience, the sense of right, was there; some feeble, wavering love of the right, was there; some occasional gratitude and prayer to God; but now all this begins to be established into a principle, a habit, a law. There is a full and solemn self-surrendering; there is a giving up, a selling and putting away, of every thing that hinders. Just and so far as this fixed resolve enters into a man's life, does a settled *character* of goodness and piety, begin to be formed.

Let me add to this statement, a word of explanation. I am not laying down any formal rule. Experience varies. A life may be tending to good, without any such marked epoch in it. It may come gradually to that decisive point, to that fixed resolve, of which I am speaking. But unless it begins in that, or comes to that, it is never the truly good and Christian life. That is the only step that surely leads to progress. And that step *can be taken.* It is in the power of every human soul to take it.

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To sum up what I have been saying — God has given us a nature with elements of good in it. It is *not* a hateful, detestable — it is *not* a mean, miserable, utterly perverted nature. There are beautiful things in our humanity; in *what* work of God, is there not beauty and good? There are involuntary sentiments and affections in every moral nature that God has made, which are to be admired and loved — this is what I have first insisted upon.

But now I say that something beyond all this, is required of us. All this is given; but something is to be gained. All this is involuntary; but something is, of set purpose, to be done. The strong and determined will is to be put forth, the will to be right and true and pure, the will to build up our souls to the highest perfection of which we *are* capable. Without this, it is in vain that our nature is capable of being good; it will come to no good. So is the earth given us to work upon; so with the soil, the shower, the sunshine to help; but all will run to weeds and waste, unless we put forth a resolute and toiling hand, to rear the goodly fruits of patient culture.

This immense crisis in life, the first, great, strong resolve — I do not say that it settles all, it is to be followed by many another — but I repeat, this solemn self-consecration, is not duly apprehended, I fear, by some among us, because they have rejected the doctrine of technical conversion from native, helpless depravity, to imparted holiness. But let them beware what they reject. There is a work to be done in life, to which nothing but the most earnest desire and fixed purpose, with the lowliest prayers for heavenly help, are equal; and if we understand the striving and agony of this great life-fight with error and passion, *this* will come with a weight to our heart and conscience, which no

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other doctrine of conversion can ever bring to bear upon us.

And now let me say upon this, a word or two more. And this is what I say. The loftiness, the strength, the glory of life, lies in this decision for the right. He who has not so vowed his soul to inward truth and sanctity, may be an amiable person, in many ways; he may have good sentiments and kind feelings; and yet he may not be a good man. How often do we see a man, falling under the cravings of sensual passion, falling under the temptation to dishonesty, who yet has many kind feelings! No, he is not a good man. That old doctrine of Calvin has its truth — that amiableness is not holiness. The very dog is amiable — has vivid affections towards his master. The true man must rise above that, must take his stand on a higher plane. The resolve, and the decision to abide by it, is what he wants. Without this he is weak, and will not resist temptation. How should he, when he cannot even determine to resist it? Without this, he is no true man. He has not yet taken that grandest step in human life, the step from sentiment to principle; the step, I repeat it, from *sentiment to principle.* No deep insight into the truth of things, into the very grounds and qualities of right and wrong, will he have. No martyrdom of sense and passion for truth and virtue, may be expected of him; no sacrifice of pleasure, profit, reputation, every thing, for allegiance to God and duty. The glory of life, he has not yet attained.

No, nor its truest joy. This further, is what I say. No, nor its truest joy. There is a joy in good fortune. There is a far higher, in the mind's gain of knowledge or truth. But there is no joy like the joy of resolved virtue. Dally with sin, with temptation; say concerning any wrong thing, that allures the mind or the

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senses, "I do not know but I shall do it; I may; I will not decide; I do not know; I will see;" and I tell you that God and your own nature have made that to be an anxious, an unhappy state of mind. Men talk of "enjoying themselves;" but you do not enjoy your*self*, *then*. Say, on the contrary, "I will not do the wrong thing that tempts me; I will not get, I will not *have* that gain or pleasure, which conscience forbids; I will never do it;" and you are free, you are disinthralled; that resolve will give you unspeakable joy.

The young man in the Gospel, who could not resolve to follow Christ, "went away sorrowful." How significant is that! "He went away sorrowful." He kept his wealth; he kept his means of luxury and pleasure; he went away, it might seem to the world, to a life of indulgence and enjoyment; but he went away, sad at heart. Yet so it ever is, when the higher nature is touched. From all faint-hearted irresolution, from all wavering or leaning towards unlawful ends, from all bargaining to sell his soul for advantage, shall every man who knows what he is doing, go away with misgiving and pain. He doesn't like the thing he is going to do. He likes the prize, but he does not like the cost to honor and conscience: that is ever a bitter drop at bottom. Only the bad man who is blind, unreflecting, abandoned by better thoughts, can be gay. He went away, this young man, touched with nobler ideas, "he went away sorrowful." Oh! if he could have followed out the first enthusiasm of his heart when he kneeled before the Master, if he could have given up all, have given up himself, and said, "yes blessed Master, I will follow thee; I *will* be thy disciple" — what joy had been his! With what joy, like that of Apostles and martyrs, would he have met toil, pain, persecution and death!

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This great self-consecration, could we make it, and never retract; could it be made here, to-day; would any one make it for himself; would we, as a company of men, say together, as we say some holy creed, "to-day we bind and pledge ourselves to the right; *here*, by the very altar of our prayers, we abjure and cast away every lingering, every last compromise with self-indulgence and sin, every false word, every fraudulent act, every mean and cruel revenge, every guilty cup, every guilty commerce with man or woman; *here* we swear an oath to God, to fight for the true and pure in ourselves, so long as we live"—no grander consecration was there ever, whether of patriots in the fastnesses of Switzerland, or of Latimer and Ridley by the martyr-fires of England. Great hour in our being! blessed hour!—none in our life could be so momentous as this—no day the beginning of so many good days to come; no day of ours that would ever shine on like this, into the days and years and ages of Eternity.

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XIII.

HUMANITY COMPARED WITH HUMAN DISTINCTIONS.

Ps. cxix. 141.—"I am small and despised, yet do not I forget thy precepts."

To be small and despised; or, what many will think amounts to the same thing, to be disregarded; to be held in the great world, as of no account; to be unknown, in the world of society, in the world of politics, in the world of fashion, in the world of literature; to be nothing in the world, to be nobody—this is felt by the aspiring ambition of many persons, to be a hard condition. I wish to address myself to this feeling; which, springing as it does, out of the very nature and condition of humanity, is probably not uncommon. It is that, with which many persons look upon what is above them—upon fame, upon happy and distinguished fortunes, upon wealth, beauty or éclat—a feeling which says, "well, and what is there for us? Who will show *us* any good?"

And it is not to be overlooked, that life opens a sphere for almost *every* man's and woman's, nay, and child's ambition. The prizes of social distinction are not *all* in camps, or courts, or crowded conventions of men. They are found in the humblest village-life as well; so that ambitious aspirings may find a place anywhere. But the worldly thought, the scholar's or the statesman's, often takes a wider range. It wants, perhaps, a fame that touches the horizon of the world:

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and when it *sees that*, when it sees the tide of human admiration rising and bearing some great name over all the seas and to the farthest continents; when that name is pronounced with honor in every land and language: nay more, when it is borne down through all the ages, and is domesticated in all the dwellings of the world, so that scarcely a civilized human being exists but has heard of Plato and Demosthenes, of Cæsar and Cicero, of Shakspeare and Milton — then it seems to our worldly eyes as if nothing on earth could compare with this: it seems as if such persons were insphered in more than mortal glory; we almost lose sight of their humanity; and can understand something of what the old Pagan world did, when it actually deified men. The admiration shows the bias of our minds, though in such a comparison we hardly think, perhaps, of asking what there is for us. We do not ask it in such case; but when some person stands by our side, who by his speeches or writings, has made his name known in all America, in all England; or when some equipage passes before us blazoned with wealth, and it bears its possessor to a splendid and luxurious home, and that abode receives, night after night, throng upon throng of gay society; or when some person's wit or beauty is the theme of general comment, and becomes a kind of shrine of social pilgrimage: then, there be many that say, "what is there for *us?* who will show *us* any good?" The question often arises, at some grand success, or sudden acquisition of fortune, or when a splendid speech is made, or perchance sermon, whose tones reverberate through the land, or some notable entertainment or fête is given and reported with names and circumstances (absurdly enough, to be sure) in the newspapers. The sound of all this goes abroad: the echoes penetrate into the noise of busi-

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ness or into the still and quiet country; and there is many a one to say — "what then, is there for me? I am, in comparison, small and despised; I live in utter obscurity; I am nothing to the world, I perform these daily tasks, I do this business, I work in my shop, or I till these silent fields, or I tend the house: I am small and humble in *my* vocation, *my* walk, *my* profession; the world knows nothing of *me;* I shall sink into a grave, at last, as undistinguished as my lot: coming generations will never ask for me; they will never know that I have lived. Ten thousand such lives as mine, seem not worth as much as that *one* magnificent life, which is lived *there*, upon the mount. And yet I am a man *too;* and not so very inferior to him, if the truth were known. Is it not hard?"

And I answer, yes, it *is* hard, if honor, if fame be the grandest boon for humanity, the highest gift of Heaven. If the ambitious world's estimate is right, it is hard. But let us see.

I will not depreciate the pleasure, the enjoyment to be derived from a lawful, from a high and well earned distinction. Suppose it to be freed from all selfishness. Suppose it to be the delight of ministering to the relief, the entertainment, nay the highest improvement of mankind. Suppose that genius feel itself to be — there has been such on the earth and there is now — to be, I say, an affluent fountain, from which streams of refreshment and blessing are flowing all over the world: and that this highest genius, or any humbler measure of it, feels this not proudly but humbly and devoutly; and says, "I am made to be such; God has made and endowed me to be such: and I am glad and rejoice in this great and beneficent power." It *is* a noble distinction: it is a creative — it is a kind of godlike power. But is *this* the highest thing in the world — to survey

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one's self? This is the point to which I wished to bring you. Now what is the privilege, the grandeur of a rational and religious nature? Is it not to behold and enjoy a universe of good, a universe of loveliness and of inspiring joy? Is it not to see God; and to see His glory and goodness in all creatures and things? But this is accorded to every rational and reverent man, to every being that has the nature of man.

What now compared with this, is the pleasure of thinking one's self some great one? One's self may be the shadow that hides the vision. But suppose it does not; *compare* the two things together. *There* is the satisfaction, the honor of being praised, talked of, celebrated. And *here* is the delight, the glory of contemplating, not one's self, not one's own honor, but an infinitude of light, loveliness and perfection. What is the consciousness of being admired, the pleasure of looking upon one's self as distinguished, to that open eye that takes in the whole realm of beauty and glory? What is a mirror reflecting yourself, compared with the telescope that gathers in its sweep the infinite multitude of resplendent worlds and systems? Suns and stars rise upon the boundless fields of space; cloud-spots on those infinite fields are now seen to be bright universes of stars; wonder and beauty fill the enraptured gazer. Take now, the gazer from this magnificent contemplation, and seat him before a glass reflecting himself; and let the flattering world bring him twenty more such, to multiply his image and show him what a great man he is: and what will he think of exchanging his sky-exploring telescope for this, — this paltry collection of cracked looking-glasses, fit to be sold at the corner of the street?

I am comparing the joy and blessing of *being* great with the pleasure of being *accounted* so. A man may

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be great, and hardly know it, or be hurt by it. A man, like Shakspeare, unconscious of his great place in the world, who heard little in his lifetime of the acclaim of praise; of whom it has been strikingly said, that "after having written his forty dramas that have filled the world and the ages with his renown, he went down into the country and lived and died, as one unconscious of having done any thing extraordinary"—such a man stands amidst his fellows in the simple and common attitude of a seer of all beauty, goodliness and glory. But just in proportion as a man thinks of himself, and gloats over his distinction, is it all in his way, a hindrance and marring to all his proper happiness as a man. How then, reads *he* the book of life, the book of the universe? It is as if, every time he took up a newspaper or journal, he looked only to see if *he* were mentioned, if *he* were praised in it; and wit and wisdom, anecdote and argument and information, all were nothing to him, compared with that one fact. No, if I must be one or the other, I had rather be the humblest admirer of a truly great man, than the greatest of self-admirers, though I think no self-admirer ever was truly great. But even if such a person may have some remarkable gifts, yet how poor and low is his taste, his happiness, compared with that of the generous, self-forgetting, enthusiastic worshipper of all worth and greatness! The vision of selfishness runs on a single narrow line, and terminates in a little opaque object, *self*—self-aggrandizement. The true human sympathy, the noble generosity befitting a man, is as an eye, to which converge millions of bright beams, that irradiate and fill the orb of our being, with their splendor and beauty.

I must desire you distinctly to observe that the comparison we are making, is not between the *powers*

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of different men to see, to enjoy, to understand the all-surrounding revelation; but it is between *power* and the *éclat* of power, between *power* and *reputation*. *Double power is* doubtless a double advantage. But that is not what we are speaking of now. That is not precisely what the world is looking at, when it sees a man elevated to a post of honor, or covered with distinction. It does not say, "what a glorious man! what a breadth of mind he has, to embrace all the wonder and beauty of all things! what inspired perceptions of all loveliness and grandeur! what a great idea of God!" No, this is not the object of worldly admiration. The thing *complained* of by most men, is *not* that they want the power to enjoy life — books, men, things, the world, the universe; but that they are undistinguished, unknown; that their talents are not duly acknowledged and honored.

And observe too that the being known, that great ability itself, is by no means a measure of capacity for the highest good and happiness. Even when it *is* evidence of mental *strength* — and I suppose it usually is proof of some kind and degree of mental superiority — still it is apt to be very different from that wide expansion of intellectual culture and generous affection, which takes in the largest amount of good. To rise into notice, it is often necessary that the forces of the mind be compressed into a narrow channel; the culture is apt to be technical, merely legal, medical, or political; the man knows these things perhaps, and knows hardly any thing else: there is a constant tendency in one direction, and it is often attended with much struggle, competition and jealousy; I have hardly ever seen the ordinary great man who did not think and make too much of himself, and was not too opinionated and impracticable, too inaccessible to the

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views and arguments of others, and too insensible to the value of every thing out of his own walk; and I have no doubt that many a person, man or woman, sitting in the lowly vale of life, modest, meditative, well-read, widely instructed, exquisitely attuned in spirit to all things goodly and beautiful, has a mind and nature, far more receptive of good, with far more inlets to all the joy and grandeur of life and of the world, than many have, who sit far above on the world's heights.

But this is not the strong point in the case — the probable effect on the mind of different careers and conditions. And the comparison, as I have just said, is *not* between different degrees of power, i.e. of endowment or ability. If this were our subject, it would require quite another line of argument; a line indeed which ultimately would lead us to that principle of submission appealed to by the Apostle, when he says, "shall the thing formed, say to him that formed it, why hast thou made me thus?" But I do not think we are driven to that ultimate ground here. For the question here, is between the grand powers and attributes of the universal humanity, and the reputation of possessing them in an unusual degree. And I say that a rational and spiritual, an admiring and adoring nature is so vast a boon, that it leaves mere eminence, mere reputation, mere distinction out of the range of all comparison.

On this subject, however I am persuaded that there is a great delusion in the world: and the present age perhaps is the very crisis of that delusion. In dark, uncultivated, unreading ages, distinction was not so widely appreciated as it is now. It was itself also, limited to the conduct of war and the headship of empires, states, baronies: it was inaccessible to the

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many. The millions lived and toiled and died, with no thought, not *they*, of celebrity; glad if they could *live*, and escape being trodden under foot by their masters. *Now* the field of competition is wider; it is parcelled out into many an arena of action and aspiration: it is opened to the multitude; and the rush of ambition is eager, and the sense of failure and defeat is keen and bitter. At the same time our actual culture is low; we have reached the point of much reading, much knowing; we read and know who is distinguished, who is admired, who is fêted, who is borne to his grave with long procession; every circumstance we know; it is printed, is pictured before our eyes. All this we have come to; but we have not yet arrived at the time of deep reflection, of meditative thought, of real self-appreciation. We still worship the old idols. The old images of grandeur are still enshrined to us; and the old lights are still flaring in our eyes. And if our sight is not so reverent as that of the former time, but is vexed and smarting with critic irritation, it only shows that the malady of ages is not yet healed.

But a calmer and healthier time for humanity, I believe, is coming, when it shall be conscious of itself, not relatively but absolutely, conscious of the boundless treasures embosomed in itself, richer than a thousand mines of gold or a thousand crowns of empire; when to admire and love the good and noble, to adore God, and to behold the glory of his works, shall be felt to be the very treasure and crown of human existence; and when though a man sits in the humblest nook, yet if he may look out upon a universe of light and beauty, it shall be such a blessing and beatitude, that all other things will sink out of sight and comparison.

What then, more definitely and distinctly have we to say to the case of disappointed ambition; or to one

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who considering the thing to be out of the question for *him*, never *had* much ambition: who either says, "I am small and despised — I am nothing in the world's account," or says, "who will show me any good?" — what, then, is there for me?

This question, brethren, must we patiently meet, and set forth, in form, to this complainer, the inventory of his powers, and privileges, and the boundless sum of blessings accorded to him? Must we not rather exclaim and wonder at his blindness and ingratitude? Here is a being, who is not shut up within the narrow confine of animal instinct, but whose very senses are windows that open to a universe of divine beauty and grandeur; he is a being, with reason and imagination and faculties divine; he has a home, and home delights; parent, child, brother, friend, all the sanctities and beatitudes of a loving nature, belong to him; and if nothing else were left, he can *pray;* and that act would translate his soul into a new life, and transform the universe into a home; all things are his, if he will enjoy them; and he would not exchange his eyesight for a kingdom nor his hearing for a mine of gold; all things are his; realms of infinite life and light spread before him; sunsets and stars and heaven's infinitude pour their magnificence around him: and what does he say? Is he not glad? Is he not thankful? Is he not happy? Is he not more than content? Does he not wonder in lowliness and humility, at God's infinite goodness to him? No; he turns away, with a dissatisfied air, and says, "I am nothing; I am not admired and praised. If I could see all this from a throne, if I could enjoy it in a conspicuous station, I should be content." Alas! how are men fooled out of their happiness, their virtue, their life's good, by this vile, worldly ambition!

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What an endowment, my friends, what a gift divine, is the power of simple admiration! It kindles the eye, it swells the heart: it transfigures our very being; it translates us out of ourselves; it is, I am inclined to say, the largest gift of joy, that can be imparted to any creature. Bring any weary, nay dull and weary traveller, to some mountain-top, where a glorious landscape bursts upon him, and he is repaid for all his toils; he forgets all his fatigues. A garden of flowers, a shady grove, a cottage on the green bank, any beautiful object of nature's or man's handiwork, touches the sense of admiration, and fills us with delight; and the world, the universe is full of such — from the garden flower to the blossoming cloud, opening fold after fold, in the warmth of the summer sky; from the butterfly's wing, to the cloud-wings, streaked with golden fires, of the angel of the setting sun. Show me such things, and you give me moments, hours of gladness; and nature is ever showing them. Or show me a beautiful picture, and it is mine, for a possession and with a joy, far beyond what mere purchase or ownership can give. Or tell me of a noble action, let me read the biography of good men; let me see such around me, excellent persons, excellent and true and honorable, pure and good beings, eyes that kindle with love and tenderness; and the gems of a diadem are not so bright and beautiful as these. Or open to me the infinitude of all this glory and loveliness in the One, Infinite and Good Being: and words are wanting; words are vain, to speak of the blessing that is accorded to me.

And you are such an one, — you to whom I speak; every one to whom I speak, the poorest and humblest, the smallest and most despised in your own account. You say that *your* chance in life is small, that *your* path

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is humble, that *you* are no great one. And yet you — what are you — and where — and whence have you come? From the forming hand of God, created from nothing; you who lately had no being, have come to the glad precincts of heaven's light; from nothing, you have stepped upon the opening threshold of this magnificent realm of existence. You say that "you are no great one;" but your eye explores the depths of heaven; your ear drinks in the music of nature; words of love and kindness, words of God, are spoken to you; and hymnings and quirings, as of heavenly angels, sweep around you through the glorious realm of sound. You say that "you are no great one;" and yet you may talk with Plato; you may converse with Fénelon and Milton; you may commune with Jesus Christ; you may — let me say it reverently — you may commune with God! You say that "you are no great one:" and yet everlasting oceans of being flow and spread before you, and invite you onward. What if, of two little children, one should say to the other, "you are handsome, and I am not; and the people notice you:" what is it to their future? Beauty changes, faculties expand, and life opens its grand sphere to them, irrespective of those childish distinctions. But that sphere, that life rising into higher life, which is opening to *you*, is not mortal, but immortal.

Brethren, I am proposing no new doctrine, using no new argument. It is the old teaching of the Apostles and Fathers of the Church. "The poor of this world," they said, are made "rich in faith and heirs of an everlasting inheritance." The lowly are lifted to glory and honor and immortality. "Ye are Christ's poor," they said; "ye are God's children." Yes, it is the *Christian* word, that has broken the tremendous spell of that worldliness, which deified the

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few, and desecrated the many; which set its favorites on the splendid heights of honor, and cast the shadow of death and forgetfulness over the undistinguished millions.

This is Heathenism and not Christianity, let it appear where it will. It is heathenism *in* Christianity, if it prevails among *us*. Christ espoused the cause of the universal humanity. He spake of a secret joy in the soul, which is above all worldly joy. He taught us that seeking to be great, is not the way to be great. He plainly says — he that exalteth himself, shall be humbled; but he that humbleth himself, shall be exalted.

Shall not all lawful distinction then, be honored, the headship of the State, the crown of intellectual power, the precedence in art, and the wealth that is justly gained? Yes, and every particle of true merit, of real talent, yet more of simple goodness, *in* these spheres, shall be duly prized; *in* them surely, as much as out of them. There is no radicalism in this teaching; no insane proposal to pull down that which is above, simply *because* it is above. It is well that it is conspicuous. And if ruder ages exaggerated its importance, as children do their master's, *that* was natural; and that too, was well. But *this* I say; the distinction, the mere *éclat*, is not worth the millionth part of what we *all* possess. This I say, that the truly great man, great in mind and heart, would not consent to have his power of thought or of love let down one degree lower, to have his honor carried a thousand degrees higher. I take hold of that judgment, and make it my own. I espouse it in behalf of all mankind. I speak for all mankind, when I say that, humble as I am, compared with many, I have that within me, which I would not give for a million times the fame of Plato or Shakspeare.

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I have thus attempted to reason with a mistake, which is but too natural indeed, which is the commonest of all mistakes in the world, but which is so pernicious and fatal to all human peace and virtue, that, although the course of my reflections may be unusual in the pulpit, yet nothing, no topic of discourse I think, could be more practical. This diseased self-consciousness, this sensitiveness about ourselves, this want of the simple, self-forgetting habit of enjoying all the good of life as it comes, all the beauty of nature, all the worth and happiness of our kind, all the beneficence of God — this, I say, is the one essential, intrinsic and everlasting misery of human life. This is the misery of miseries, a selfish heart. The only remedy — to that simple, sacred, grand love of the Gospel of Jesus Christ, must we come — the only remedy is a loving heart. I am not going to discourse upon it further. I only say — behold the disease; and behold the cure.

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XIV.

THIS LIFE THE PROPHECY OF A FUTURE.

1 JOHN iii. 2.—"Beloved, now are we the sons of God; and it doth not yet appear what we shall be."

THIS language is of the nature of an argument. *Now* are we the sons of God; we are endowed with faculties and graces which entitle us to that appellation; what may we not hope to be hereafter? A little while since we woke to existence, in a state of almost unconscious infancy; a few years have elapsed; and now we stretch out our hands to infinitude, to eternity, to God. If so much can be achieved in the infancy of our being and in so short a space of time, what may not be the future of such a beginning? "It doth not yet appear," says the Apostle, in a tone of sublime expectation, "what we shall be."

The intimations, then, in our present being, of progress and development—this is the subject of my present discourse. This life, with all of possession that it has, is yet more a prophecy. There are many things in us, that mark an unfulfilled design—hopes and fears, thoughts unutterable, imaginations, ideals never realized, that strike out into realms beyond this world.

It is so even in the minds of children. Thoughts come into their minds—you must have witnessed them—things that they say of themselves, things that they say of God, which are wonderful, and out of all proportion to every thing else in their present experience;

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thoughts that have no present result in their character. They come and go, like flashes of light in a summer cloud.

Especially there are cases, you are aware of them, in which children of five or six years surpass the profoundest mathematicians, in the grasp and rapidity of their calculations. It is a human mind that does this. It is, in all other respects, a child's mind. May it not be, because some bodily clogs upon thought are removed? Might not all minds be such, if they were thus freed?

Nay, are there not in fact, such prophetic phenomena in all minds? In sleep, in dreams, when the bodily powers are suspended, it is now proved that the scenes and thoughts of whole waking hours, pass through the mind in a moment. A gunshot wakes the sleeper, and while waking he passes through the heady currents of a long day's battle. And in the few moments' suspended animation of partial drowning, a whole lifetime comes under the mind's review. To what may not the dreaming and half-drowned soul awake, when this dull vesture of decay drops from it? And every time we open our eyes upon an extended landscape, in the time of that momentary glance, we make a hundred mental comparisons — distinct calculations, to ascertain and fix the distance of every object. What may not be the range of such a mind, when the immortal fields are opened to it?

There are other conditions of the mind that yield a still stronger argument. Argument I say; and yet something like intuition there seems to be, that opens to us the unscaled heights of some far and future career. The whole of the mind's idealizing, if it is not given to mock us, must be prophecy of realities that are to take body and form. Why should we be able

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to imagine something grander than we are to be? Why should this faculty be given, if it is but to disappoint and defraud us?

And we do imagine great things. We call ourselves dull creatures: and there is promise in *this*, too: it would be a poor sign for us to be satisfied. But amidst all our earthly dulness, what thoughts from time to time visit us, what thoughts sky-piercing and full of ecstasy, that seem like the stirring and uplifting of angel-wings for some boundless flight. They come to us unbidden; it seems as if they came out from some purer sphere, these heavenly dreamings of life and love and beauty. What do they mean? What are they, if they are not foregleams of coming light? And the earth is full of things that so move us.

> "It may be a sound,
> A tone of music — summer's eve — or spring,
> A flower — the wind — or ocean" —

which thus strikes "the electric chain wherewith we are darkly bound."

And who so dull, that sometimes a strain of music, heard in the twilight, heard in the night-time, does not transfigure and translate his whole being, into a new form, into a higher sphere, and bear him to visions beyond mortal sight, realms of fancy and regions of heaven?

And loftier things there are, strong-hearted truth, heroic self-denial, all-surrendering love, patient sorrow, heaven-born faith; are these destined to sink back into themselves, and die, bearing nothing? The flame of the martyr's sacrifice, that shoots out into the darkness of this world, does it not flash back from the immortal heights, that stand serene in the world beyond? Yet more; the veneration and love that go out to the

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Infinite Perfection. God has created in us that aspiration; how can it be that it should ever be disappointed? How can it be, that he should ever be stricken down, by the Almighty hand from his highest hope, who humbly says, "My Father! Father all-merciful! open to me forever and forever, the boundless fulness of Thy perfection. Oh! by all that I am, by all that Thou hast made dear to me, vouchsafe to me the fulfilment of the one hope!"

I do not know that I can say any thing, to beget in myself a stronger trust, than what I have now said. But if it seem imaginary to any, if any one discrediting these aspirations, demands that we go down to the lowest grounds of human experience; if he talks of ignorance and failure in this poor human nature, let us see how these very failures are prophetic failures; how the very barriers tempt us to overleap them.

First, failure of utterance. How much in us, is unexpressed! How much in us, is never uttered; and never can be! How many feel, that the thousandth part of what they experience, is never unfolded! It is the peculiar prerogative of genius, to breathe out its soul into speech, form, music; but what man of genius ever felt, that he had yet unveiled half the strength and beauty of his thought? The divinest things in us refuse to take any form. The sublimest, brightest, holiest things never are expressed; they are never uttered in poetry or eloquence, never chiselled into marble, never painted on the canvas, nor even breathed in music. The treasures of the world's *manifested* genius, are poor, compared with its hidden wealth. But for *most* men, who neither speak, nor write, nor paint, nor sing their thoughts, I feel that I walk among them as muffled figures, in which is a world of thought and feeling, wrapped from the general eye in silence

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and seclusion. Well, perhaps, that it is so; for the free unveiling of all hearts, I suppose, would make life too keen and intense — nay, tragical. Walking one day with the President of one of our Colleges in the country, amidst the youth under his charge, I said to him — "do we consider — do we know what these *are*, that are around us, apparently so quiet and decorous? Do you remember your own youth? Can you penetrate, through these outward forms, to the deep, powerful, passionate life within, to those *thoughts* in these young hearts, that rush like the swift streams or sweep like the mountain winds around us?" "No," was his reply, "I dare not; it would kill me to enter, with that intimate sympathy, into each one's experience." Doubtless, it was true. I suppose that every playground, every social circle, every public assembly holds in its bosom *that*, which if it broke loose into expression, or if it were only depicted in each countenance, would fill us with astonishment, if not affright. Then should we know that life is more than we *see;* that it doth not appear what we *are*.

Next, failure in development. The undeveloped I say, that which exists in embryo; what is all human wisdom and accomplishment to *that?* A drop in the bucket, the small dust of the balance. Take the first man you meet, however ignorant, uncultivated, bent to the earth alike in body and mind. What is in him? Of what is he capable? Of intelligence, culture, refinement; he might be a man of science, a geometer, a philosopher; perhaps, the heights of art, eloquence, poetry, are not too lofty for his powers. It doth not yet appear what he may be. Alas! society is working poorly for his culture; working against it in many ways. His very trade, his farming or his handicraft, might instruct him, if he were rightly trained. The

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business of life, was meant to develop his powers; but now he is buried in its bosom. In some other state, in some future world, in some fairer clime, he may come *out*, into freedom, enlargement, and magnificent growth. It doth not yet appear what he shall be.

Again, failure in conception. Not only of the undeveloped, but of the unsuspected, how much may there be, in our humanity, and in the yet unfolded worlds of its thought and imagination! The wisest, the most highly accomplished man, perhaps, little knows, either what is within him, or what he is capable of. None of us suspect, it may be, not even the most learned, what the range of our knowledge may yet embrace. Human science has *already* outstripped all past anticipation. The wonderful discoveries in astronomy made within the last quarter of a century — what inconceivable spaces in the depths of heaven, have they opened to our view. What is now the field of human thought? The voyager, who has circumnavigated the globe, seems to us to have passed over an immense distance. But in one second, while my pulse beats once, light travels eight times as far. And now it is ascertained that there are stars in our system, so distant that their light requires several thousands of years to come to us. But take the lowest calculation, *one* thousand years. Every minute it has travelled, twelve millions of miles — every hour, nearly a thousand millions; and it has been coming on, on — hours, days, years, centuries: ay, ten awful silent centuries have watched its infinite flight. That ray of light — think of it! Before William the Conqueror came into England, during the reign of Alfred, that ray of light left its native sphere, sunk, how inconceivably far into the boundless infinitude! — for a thousand years it has travelled onward, twelve millions of miles each min-

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ute, and to-night it will arrive; to-night it will enter the astronomer's telescope! Oh! could he identify, or would he in his thought, single out that ray of light — that traveller through the bright infinitude of spheres; with what awe would he look upon it! With what bursting exclamations or silent astonishment, would he sink down overwhelmed with awe and wonder!

I remember one of my townsmen, who many years ago had been to see the falls of Niagara, and who, on his return, was asked how he felt, when looking at the stupendous cataract. "A few years ago," he replied, "two men were overtaken in the forests of Pennsylvania by a tornado. The trees to which they clung, were twisted off, a few feet above their heads, and swept on, like feathers upon the blast. When it had gone by, one of the travellers found a voice to say to his companion — 'how is it with you? — how have you felt?' Sinking upon his knees, he could only exclaim, 'Oh! God.'" So would one exclaim, and only with the deeper awe, at this stupendous unveiling of the illimitable depths beyond depths, the inconceivable abysses of the unbounded universe. "O God!" — well might we exclaim — "what art thou? What shall we think of thy greatness? What shall we do with these swelling wonders of knowledge? How *bear* these awful revelations!"

But now there presents itself to us something still more worthy of our attention, more illustrative of the theme we are considering, even than all this grasp of knowledge. For, aghast, staggered as we are, overwhelmed by such thoughts of infinitude and of God, with this sense of indescribable and boundless majesty and mystery that comes over us, what follows? Does it crush us to the dust? This strain upon thought, where million worlds are weighed, does it weaken us?

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No, the mighty burthen does not weaken, but strengthens us. "What *am* I?" — must not one say? "Is not some more stupendous nature than I had thought of, introduced to me for my own? Is not this soul *indeed* a portion of the Divinity, partaking something of his infinitude? Have not those words, "made in the image of God, partakers of the divine nature," a new meaning? And what meaning? Who shall define it, who limit? — still more, define or limit what it *shall* be? See, I still say, the tendencies of this nature. See where it stretches. A creation is discovered from whose farthest confine, light is a thousand — nay, it is many thousand years, in coming to us. Does the soul sink into itself, as it were weighed down, annihilated at that thought? Is even that glorious vesture of light — stretched upon the loom of eternity, woven upon the bosom of infinitude — is even that, a splendid veil to quench the eye in darkness, or a winding-sheet to wrap the soul in death? No, it bursts forth from all confine, from the envelopment of the whole known creation, and asks for the unknown, looks through the illimitable void beyond, in hope to discover other realms of the unbounded ALL.

And then, that this far-reaching, far-soaring mind — all compact as it were of light, and endowed with its swiftness — that this mind should be wrapped in the dark garment of mortality, clothed and seemingly clogged with fleshly veils, subject to poor and humble needs, of household care and the day's work, set to hold mastery over animal instincts; that earthly passion must touch and try it, and the frail senses teach and train it — all this begets question, deep question. Is not this some majesty in disguise? Like the great caliph who walked among his unsuspecting subjects, so amidst toils and cares, and riches and vanities,

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ay and thrones and dominions, doth not this inward majesty walk, and they know it not? What *is it*, that I *am?* Can the frail senses tell me, or can worldly business or pleasure teach me? Ay, or can any philosophy declare it, or can any astrologic lore cast its sublime horoscope? Has it waked, as Plato saith, from some earlier being? No memory of mine, runs back upon long ages of preparation, or progress. *Yesterday*, my wondrous soul burst into being. Whence came it, but from God? Whence could it have come, but from God? What other power, what combination of all the other powers in the universe, could have created this living THOUGHT, this adoring soul! But I am not speaking of its origin in this discourse; its future is our subject: this great prophecy that is wrapped up in our present being.

With a view to this, let us now take a different survey. Let us pass from the material to the spiritual realms of thought.

In these realms, certain beings exist; some of them imaginary, others real. We talk of holy saints and heavenly angels. We talk of the wise and good, of heroes and sages, of canonized martyrs, and men and women of almost more than mortal mould and nobleness. Do we consider that none of these beings, whether imaginary or real, exist to us but in our *thought?* Whatever they be, however great, or strong, or wise or glorious, our thought is the measure that we take of them. It makes no difference to the case whether this knowledge is imparted or original, or whether the objects are imaginary or real, or whether the ideas we have, are too high or too low. Doubtless they may be very imperfect; they may differ widely in different men; the very words that clothe our ideas — *holy*, *just*, *good*, *beautiful* — may mean tenfold more to

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some men than others — what is a garment ten times brighter, to that ten times brighter vesture of thought? — but such as our ideas are, they are our *ideas*. No distinct and comprehensible thing exists in the spiritual realm, but it exists within me; not indeed, as a character, but as a conception. All that we admire on earth or in heaven, hath its archetypes within us. The whole hierarchy of holy men and heavenly angels sits in the temple of the soul. Plato, so far as I know him, is within me; and Milton and Fénelon are familiar guests of my fellow-spirit; and Gabriel — what form soever of resplendent nature, waits around the eternal throne, comes down to earth to be embodied in a human conception. They are beings of the imagination you may say to *us;* they are ideals; and we know not precisely how far the reality corresponds with what we think; but the elements and modes of that high imagining are within us.

But now observe again, the same trait in our experience that was before mentioned. Are we ever satisfied with our attainment, in the spiritual, any more than in the material sphere? Highest man, highest angel, that we can conceive of — is not our mind ever stretching to something higher? Yes: a beautiful vision of something more perfect, is forever going before and beyond every thing that we have seen or imagined. How inexpressibly poor seems always our own personal attainment! And what does our humility mean, but that we are conscious of vast capacities neglected? And how deep is that consciousness! How does it turn us against ourselves, and make a perpetual warfare in our own bosoms! How patiently do men sit, and hear themselves told that they are sinners, that they are erring and evil! Nay, what a strange pleasure we have, in upbraiding and invective levelled against our-

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selves, against human nature, against the age, against the time, against every thing that is.

Therefore it is in part that Jesus Christ gathers around him such veneration and love, as no other being on earth ever did. We conceive of *him*, as one that went *beyond* all our experience, all our definite conception. Nor is this, as I believe, the ideal of fond and idolizing devotees, a case where the reality did not exist, and the Christian ages have accumulated upon their model man, all the wealth of their imagination and sentiment. On the contrary when we draw nearer to the Christ, by going back and reading the Christian record, the reality seems ever to rise higher and higher than we had imagined. I am persuaded that no one sits down to that wondrous record, and strives to penetrate with deeper insight, into the mind of Christ, but feels more and more that there are soundless depths in it, of spiritual wisdom and beauty; and the more the mere conventional admiration passes away and the nearer he approaches the reality, the more will he feel this. How poor and vague is the customary admiration of Jesus, that prevails through the Christian world, to what that living sense of the reality would be!

But all the glowing image that any have of him, be it remembered, is mirrored in the disciple's heart. "Christ is formed within" it. Nay, and when we rise to the ineffable nature of the Supreme, to the unbounded Glory, which we may study forever and find no limit; yet, I say, all that the adorer does distinctly behold, hath its image in himself; and it is expressly said in holy and awful words, that God is within him. Such then is the teaching in the spiritual realm, concerning the nature and tendency of those high powers, that are yet in their infancy; that yet lie half slumber-

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ing in the bosom of our humanity; that do not yet appear as they shall be.

And now what do we say, in both views? The mind is a mirror that reflects the universe of being. Over the field of its solemn vision, passes the train of the heavenly worlds; and there too, are imaged the ranks and orders of all human and celestial hierarchies, known or conceived of. Nay, the IDEA OF GOD — that shadow of unknown majesty and beauty, passes over this wondrous mirror — the soul.

Is the mirror perfect? Alas! no; broken it is, and full of flaws, and marred with rough and dark spots. No; it doth not yet appear what it shall be. I see beginnings in man, no end; wrestling, not achievement; unfolding, not maturity. And still it is so with him to the very end of life. If this world nurtured man as it does all its other products, vegetable and animal, to a certain completeness and perfection, if age rounded the circuit of his attainments, we might think that all he shall ever be, now appears. But age does not finish his problem nor fulfil his destiny. Age does not make his nature aged. Only his body is old. Still upon the themes of his highest thought, his mind glows with more than youthful aspiration. Still he sighs for light, more light. Upon the borders of the grave he stands, and stretches out his hands, to infinity and eternity for light, for progress, for new fields resplendent with everlasting light and glory.

But I will not urge it further. All things beside, sooner or later, unfold and display the latent powers within them. The dark germ expands into the tree; the tree opens its blossoms to the sky; the poor earthworm becomes a winged creature of the air.

But *our* being is not quite buried in torpor and darkness. Already it is bursting out into light and expan-

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sion. Full it is, of epochs and heroic crises. It feels itself called upon to act and to advance. "Onward!" is the call of many a great hour of our being; "onward! to the battle — and victory!" And to this earth-strife, that presses upon us every day, to this solemn waiting, — to this dim bordering upon the realm of boundless light, is there not a voice that says, "onward! onward forever!" Beautiful phrase that describes the departed; "they have passed on." Not, they are dead; but — "they have passed on!"

God forbid that we should minister here to self-complacency or pride! We *are* something; and I have no toleration nor patience for the pulpit phrase that says, we are nothing. We are something: we have done something; we have attained something; but "it doth not yet appear what we shall be." *Yet* we see through a glass darkly. Dim as well as vast are the visions that float before us. A grand outline is struck out for us, but how little is it filled up! Poor and weak and low especially, is all our spiritual strength and light; and the wisest and best men most feel it to be so.

Progress, then, is our being's motto and hope. Gaining and losing in *this* world, rising and falling, enjoying and suffering, are but the incidents of life. Learning, aspiration, progress, is the life of life. Onward! then, pilgrims to eternity! The day is far spent for some of us: the night is at hand: and over its sublime portal, through which the evening stars of this world, but the morning stars of eternity, are shining, is written, "Eye hath not seen nor ear heard, neither have entered into the heart of man, the things, which God hath prepared for them that love him."

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XV.

CHRIST INTELLIGIBLE AND IMITABLE.

THERE are two or three passages of Scripture, which I have chosen to give direction to our thoughts this morning; as

1 PET. ii. 21. — "Christ suffered for us, leaving us an example that we should walk in his steps."

HEB. iv. 15. — "For we have not a high priest who cannot be touched with a feeling of our infirmities, but who was tempted in all points as we are, yet without sin."

JOHN xv. 15. — "I have called you friends."

PHIL. iii. 10. — "That I may know him and the power of his resurrection, and the fellowship of his sufferings."

And the question I have to ask, is, can we understand this? Or must it be wrapped to our minds in vagueness and mystery? We would meditate on the Christ. But how? Is it as an intelligible being, or only as an enshrined excellence, that we are to think of him? Certainly, an example to be imitated must be intelligible; and the very sinlessness of the Christ is taught with the emphatic admission that he was tempted in all points as we are; which shows that even *that* was meant for our imitation.

The greatest thing for us, is to know that which is greatest; to know, to see, and feel it. And yet the loftiest moral grandeur that stands in the world, is, I fear, the least clearly and comprehensively seen.

There is nothing I should so much value as a great and divinely seeing criticism of the Gospel. We

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traverse a sixth part of the globe, to converse with the great ideas of the Past, in architecture, sculpture and painting. We would go as far again, to read the highest productions of the English mind, if we could not reach them at less cost. But it would be worth more than a pilgrimage around the world, to read the Gospel in a new light, to get a new insight into its great meaning, a new key to its boundless wealth, to *find* the treasure which it holds in its very ideals of the great, the true and blessed.

I do not mean to say that nothing of this has been understood. It is indeed a striking proof of the naturalness and vitality of the character of Jesus, that it should have penetrated and made its way to the heart, through so many folds of error and formalism and superstition. But still I apprehend that in the estimation of too many, his character is something formal and not really interesting, being regarded too much as a mere impassive model; his perfection looked upon as some sublime and unattainable spiritualism; and his sinlessness as a negative quality, in some respects below the level of lofty virtue. I believe that Jesus appears to most men's thoughts, as a calm and unimpassioned being, too uniformly grave and sad for their hearty sympathy; that he always appears before them with head declined and pitying eye, gentle, submissive, patient, and that they never justly conceive of the strength and majesty of his nature — of the mighty work done *in* him as well as by him. So the painters have always represented him: and such kind of reverence has there been for the Christ, that it has never dared to go behind the veil which *itself* has spread around him, and to imagine the freer actings, the light and shade, the smile and tear, the domestic freedom and joyance, the mingling of spontaneous

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thoughts and feelings, that belong to our idea of perfected humanity. Jesus said to his disciples, I have called you friends; and is it necessary to our idea of a good, and wise being to suppose that between him and his friends and pupils, there should have been none of the freedom of friendship? Had he been a formal person, a solemn mentor alone, I can hardly conceive how he could have so attached his disciples to him—have drawn to himself that unutterable affection which they evidently felt for him: nor would he then have been, as it seems to me, an example of our humanity in the full circuit of all its faculties and affections. It is true that the disciples in the narratives which set their Master before us, scarcely refer to the lesser feelings and lighter moods that have their place even in the grandest life; because it was evidently their main and engrossing business to describe a public mission. It is true too, that no painter or verbal describer, however he may feel at liberty to present the lofty Ideal in all the varied attitudes of a real and genuine human life, should ever fail to portray the great and holy soul that shone through every act and look, through the smile of love or the rebuke of wisdom, through the words of household talk that said, "go and provide the chamber for the feast," or the indignant manner that spoke in those words, "get thee behind me, Satan, for thou savorest not the things that be of God."

But whatever be our reverence for Jesus, even though it attribute to him a nature ever so extraordinary and exalted, still we must remember that he is presented to us as the great ideal, model, example of all that we should be. An example, to produce its effect upon us, must appear to be, at once, intelligible and imitable. And we naturally desire to go behind

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the general idea, to the inner spirit and life. We never read of a great and good man, whose visible life is clothed with splendid and heroic actions, without wishing to retire with him to his privacy; to see or to know what he thought as he sat in his solitary apartment; or what he said when his familiar friends were around him. And have we never striven to imagine, what it would have been to have walked with Jesus, and to have talked with him on the shore of Genessaret, or to have sat with him in the house of Mary and Martha? There are doubtless limitations here — i.e. as to what we can expect to know; the very object of the biography shows that it is occupied with setting forth, as I have already said, the acts and words, and relationships and events of a public mission. The example is that of one, who was cut off in early life, who had not sustained all the relations of humanity, nor met all its exigencies of possible trial and responsibility. We are not led to ask what Jesus might have been, as the ruler of a state or of a household. But in his relations of childhood, friendship and general benevolence we are. And we feel that it is no derogation from the dignity of the Christ that he was a child, and showed all childlike subjection and docility to his parents; that he was a son, and manifested signal tenderness for his mother; that he was a friend, at once the most affectionate, disinterested, and patient in his love, and the most frank and faithful in his reproof; and that as a sufferer he sought the sympathy of his disciples and friends. *Could* we but know what he sometimes said to them in more private hours; what he said that was *not* in connection with his mission! And yet, are we altogether precluded from this kind of knowledge? Are not some glimpses afforded us of his more private character and relations.

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Let us consider this. Let us consider first, what we are taught concerning him, in his social relations.

Jesus evidently discriminates among the dispositions of his disciples. He does not treat them all alike, or in a general and staid manner, as pupils. We see that he had a particular affection for John. We see that he distrusted the firmness of Peter, while he confided in his attachment. What can be more touching and beautiful than his treatment of these disciples in the last interview! Peter had denied him; yes in the last critical and trying hour, he had denied even that he knew him. Jesus testified no anger nor disdain towards the fallen disciple. He did not upbraid him *at the time*. He only said, "Peter!" Ah how thrilling must have been that monitory and gentle tone as it penetrated through the noise and throng of the Judgment Hall! But now, he does not treat him coldly; all is over; the disciple has wept for his fall; and Jesus only, yet pointedly says to him, "Simon, Son of Jonas, lovest thou me more than these?" Peter had formerly protested, "though all men forsake thee, yet will not I." Lovest thou me more than these love me? Peter replies, "yea, Lord, thou knowest that I love thee. Jesus saith unto him, Feed my lambs. He saith unto him the second time — not immediately perhaps; I do not read this as a kind of catechism; it was after they had supped; conversation perhaps, intervened — the varying circumstances of such an interview; but again Jesus, coming close to the fallen disciple, says, in a low tone of suppressed sorrow, Simon, son of Jonas, lovest thou me? Peter again replies, Lord, thou knowest that I love thee. Again, after a while perhaps — Jesus turning to him, says with the emphasis of a third interrogation, Simon, lovest thou me? Peter was grieved, because he said to him the

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third time, Lovest thou me? And he said unto him, Lord, thou knowest all things; thou knowest that I love thee. Jesus saith unto him, Feed my sheep. Yes, Apostle shalt thou be; yea, and martyr. Verily, verily I say unto you, when thou wert young thou girdedst thyself and walkedst whither thou wouldst; but when thou shalt be old, thou shalt stretch forth thy hands and another shall gird thee, and carry thee whither thou wouldst not." Yes, true friend, restored disciple; the seal of martyrdom shall be put upon thy fidelity. Could Peter do any thing but bow his head in solemn and silent acquiescence? Yes, ever curious, eager, restless, objective in all his habits of thought, he turns towards John, and he says, even in that overwhelming moment he says, "and what shall *he* do? What shall be his fate?" Jesus replies, with the reproving exclamation, "What if he tarry till I come! What is that to thee? Follow *thou* me!" As if he said, "I have no fears for *him*, let what will befall him; follow *thou* me!" And how different from either of these, is his manner towards the traitor, Judas; upon whose avaricious and hardened heart, he knew that all expostulation would be thrown away. When he had reluctantly designated him as the betrayer, he says briefly and coldly — as if it were aside — "what thou doest, do quickly." No vain upbraiding, no useless comment on the traitor's ingratitude, no weak multiplying of words, such as an ordinary person would have used; but with calm and stoic dignity, he says, "what thou doest, do quickly."

Observe him next, in the house of Martha and Mary. It was evidently a house of familiar resort to Jesus. Bethany was only two miles from Jerusalem; it was a quiet suburban retreat from the city throng and excitement, one of those refuges by the wayside of life,

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where wearied friendship may sit down and find repose. We are told that Jesus loved Martha, and her sister, and Lazarus. On a certain occasion they entertained him. You are familiar with the narrative, but let us attend to it a moment. Martha, we are informed, was engrossed with hospitable cares; while Mary, forgetting all else, sat at the feet of the revered and beloved guest, and listened to his wisdom. Martha complains of this; and she complains in terms that show the familiar, and if I may say so, the household intimacy that subsisted between them. She said, "dost thou not care that my sister hath left me to serve alone? Bid her therefore that she help me." This would not be said to a stranger or mere acquaintance. Jesus replies, "Martha! Martha!" — and I cannot help seeing something significant in that repetition of her *name;* it seems to intimate that this was not the first time he had spoken of this fault. "Martha, Martha! thou art careful and troubled about many things; but one thing is needful; and Mary hath chosen the good part; I cannot deny her the privilege she so loves."

But at length into this happy household, trouble comes. Lazarus is sick. Immediately the sisters send a message to Jesus, as to a family friend. He receives the communication as perfectly natural and proper; he does not rebuke the freedom; he testifies the liveliest sympathy at the intelligence; he converses upon it with his disciples. But he does not immediately obey the impulse of his affections. He has higher thoughts of the occasion, and blends the objects of his public mission, with the offices of private friendship. After two days, when all was over, he goes to Bethany. How natural to the most intimate friendship is that which follows! The sisters learn that he approaches their dwelling. Martha arises and goes to meet him;

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and she says with something like reproach as well as confidence, "if thou hadst been here, my brother had not died." Then she returns into the house, and says secretly to Mary — there must be no loud tones in the house of affliction — in whispered accents, she says, "the Master is come and calleth for THEE." He would see the one dearest, and most in sympathy with himself, in that trying moment. Mary goes forth and repeats the tender expostulation that her sister had uttered, "thou didst not come — oh! if thou hadst been here, my brother had not died." Jesus had spoken to Martha the consolatory words, "thy brother shall live again." She had replied almost querulously, "I know that he shall rise again in the resurrection, at the last day." Calmly he answered in that sublime declaration, "I am the resurrection and the life; he that believeth in me, though he were dead, yet shall he live. In that living breath of God's love, in which I live, there is no death. Immortal life and blessedness embosoms the soul that lives in that love." But when he sees *Mary* weeping, he is touched with an emotion beyond utterance; the human sympathy overcomes him; he groans in spirit and is troubled. And he says to those around, "where have ye laid him? They say unto him, Come and see." Bending over the tomb, Jesus wept — shed tears of sorrowing affection. And the Jews said, "See, how he loved him!"

Soon after we find Jesus again with his friends in Bethany. It was perhaps his farewell visit. It was only six days before the fatal passover. The grateful sisters made a supper for him. Martha again was busy with serving. But Mary took a very costly ointment of spikenard, and anointed his feet, and wiped his feet with her hair, and the house was filled with the odor of the ointment. Then broke forth reproaches from

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some around, as if this were a waste. And Jesus said, with protective rebuke, taking the part of this lovely disciple, "let her alone; against the day of my burying hath she kept this. The poor, do ye say, might have been benefited by it? — pleading, with hard and hackneyed spirit, the ever just claim. Yes, the poor indeed must be helped; ye have them always with you, but me ye have not always. The claims of the poor may yield for the time, to this rich and fragrant effusion of love. And "verily I say unto you, wherever this Gospel shall be preached in all the world, there shall this, which this woman hath done, be told for a memorial of her!"

Looking at this whole narrative, say, was there ever any thing more lovely and majestic in human friendship than this?

I must not dwell longer at present on illustrations of this nature, in which I have endeavored to relieve the character of Jesus from that sort of magisterial abstraction, which it is too apt to wear to our thoughts, and to show it to you as penetrated by living, generous and beautiful affections.

There is another view of it, to which, with like intent, I wish to draw your particular attention. I mean the sinlessness of the Christ. I have said that it is regarded mainly as a negative quality. It is looked upon, I believe, as something merely harmless, and therefore tame and uninteresting; or as something merely miraculous, and therefore as inimitable and without merit. It is admirable, no doubt; it is something to be wondered at; but there is nothing, I fear, to the common apprehension, strong and high, and at the same time, truly human in it.

Now native, passive innocence — innocence without effort or struggle, is not to us the highest and noblest

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quality. To hold the steady rein over passion and appetite; to feel the impulse that may carry us too far, and yet never to suffer it to carry us too far; to stand in the presence of some stupendous temptation, and yet to stand firm, unfaltering and immovable; this is the highest grandeur that can be attained in this world. And this grandeur I conceive, we are to ascribe to Jesus. We are to remember that "he was tempted in all points as we are, yet without sin." Then must he have known what the human tendencies to evil were, while he perfectly controlled them. Then was it possible for him to sin; and his refraining was a voluntary act. Then must the senses have spread their allurements before him, and he must have resolutely forbidden to them any, the least indulgence, even in thought. What else are we taught in the account given of his temptation in the wilderness? Appeals were made to appetite, to ambition, and rash reliance upon divine interposition; and he firmly rejected them all. Why is celebrated his submission in Gethsemane to the Will above, that had ordained for him a painful death, unless there were in him a natural dread of such a death? Why his forgiveness on the cross, if indignation against cruel enemies were not the involuntary impulse of wronged and persecuted innocence?

What glory there is here, beyond the reach of mere innocence and beyond the power of mere miracle! Great men have conquered kingdoms and mastered thrones. Men of great mental power, have sounded the depths of philosophy, and soared to the heights of imagination. They have painted or described pictures of surpassing moral beauty. But show us the great man, or the inspired genius, who has held all the perilous tendencies of human nature in strong and overmastering control; against whom the scrutiny of

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eighteen centuries cannot allege one fault; who in the secret and sublime consciousness of his own soul can say, "I am innocent; which of you convinceth me of sin?" Show us the great man who in the hidden hour of secrecy and impunity, ay, and in the hidings of his own bosom, alone, unseen, unimpeachable, has held every human passion in absolute check; who never saw hour or a moment, in which he could not bathe his conscience in sweetest innocence; and bow his soul in fearless, unreproaching communion with God. The world has not shown one such. In that awful sanctity and sublimity, in that "holy of holies," has never stood but one being on earth — Jesus of Nazareth. How does he stand apart and alone in that majesty! What an unapproached eminence is that! He could have sinned: he did not sin. He could have failed to his great office: he did not fail. Say not that this is more than human. Say not that this is beyond all human power. You know not what human power is, till you have put it all forth; and till you have brought about it, by the might and confidence of prayer, all the power of God to help it. Oh! we know not — shame to our indolence and apathy! — we know not what we might do and be. But Jesus knew and proved it. What an awful purity and power was that in the depths of the Christ-spirit, in that great anointed Soul! What battling is there of all the world's legions and empires, like that of sin with the secret heart! Well is he who gained the victory in this conflict, the Lord of the spiritual creation. Well does he stand at the head of a long succession of ages; well that, with anniversaries of joying for him or sorrowing with him, he is celebrated to this day, and celebrated forever!

With the same view, i.e. to bring the great Example,

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as far as we can, within the range of our sympathy and imitation, let us look at the sufferings of Jesus. It is common to regard them as mysterious; as superhuman, or as having some peculiar relation to the deliverance of mankind from sin and misery. But if he suffered, leaving us an example, there must be something for us to comprehend. Paul says, "that I may know him, and the fellowship of his sufferings." And indeed, was there ever any thing more touchingly human, than, from the account that is given, were his sufferings? Observe him and listen to him in Gethsemane. When he came there, he said to his disciples, "sit ye here, while I go and pray yonder." He would be alone; and yet not altogther alone, for he took with him Peter and the two sons of Zebedee. And was there not something remarkable in the selection? Peter needed strengthening; and it was for the two sons of Zebedee, that their mother had asked, that they should sit, the one on his right hand, and the other on his left, with him in his glory; and who had said, "we *can* drink of the cup that thou drinkest of." He would rebuke their worldliness; he would have them *see* what that cup was. For there, he began to be sorrowful and very heavy. And he said, "my soul is exceeding sorrowful, even unto death; tarry ye here, and watch with me." "And watch with me!" what more tender and relying appeal to friendship could there be than that! And he went a little farther, and fell on his face, and prayed, saying, "O my Father, if it be possible, let this cup pass from me; nevertheless not as I will, but as thou wilt." Oh! look not upon this as a scenic show, as a fair-seeming model only: as if he *knew* that he must fall into the bloody hands that waited for him, and made this prayer of submission only as a proper example. No, no, sincerely he said, "if it be possible"

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— doubtless he thought it was *not;* but it *might;* he knew not how.

And then having prayed thus, he returned to the little company of friends — all he *had*, to help him in that hour; and he finds them asleep: and he says, especially to Peter, lately so loud in profession, "What! could ye not watch with me one hour?" — and then considerately adds, — "the spirit indeed is willing but the flesh is weak." And he went away the second time, and prayed, saying, "O my Father, if this cup may not pass away except I drink it, thy will be done!" And the third time he went and prayed in the same words. *In the same words.* How touching is that repetition! How natural is it to a mind exhausted, absorbed by sorrow and agony, to seek no variety of expression — to say "the same words"! And was it *bodily* suffering alone that invested him with its horrors? Listen to him upon the cross — "Eloi, Eloi, lama sabachthani — my God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?"

A stoic might say that this was weak. But in the grand simplicity of the Christ-spirit, there was no pride, no braving of pain and agony, no assumption of what was not in it, and never was in any rational nature — an indifference to pain and agony. Not in any stoic pride, not in any martyr's defiance of his persecutors, did Jesus find his resource; but in patience, in submission, in God. But was all sorrow — agony? Oh no! With what a vision all-triumphant did he look through it to the end! and for the joy that was set before him, endured the cross!

This, my brethren, is the example that we are to follow. It is this that is especially commended to us, in the emblems of Christ's suffering and patience that are set before us this day. It is this which we understand by the observance of the Lord's Supper.

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We are about to pass to that observance. I say, we are about to pass to it; for in *my* view, it is properly, and so ought to be regarded, a part of our morning service and meditation. It is so to *me*. I shall not refuse to adopt the usage of giving the benediction at the close of this part of the service: it can never harm us to say, "God bless us!" The benediction is truly nothing but a short prayer. And there will be an interval for all who wish to retire, to do so. But I shall then proceed to the ritual commemoration which follows, as a part of our morning worship and meditation. I shall not enter into it, as some awful peculiarity, some Eleusinian mystery, that is to be set apart and shut up by itself. It was not originally any such thing, but was a portion of the stated worship of the whole body of believers. I have been commemorating Christ. I have been reverently remembering him, in this whole morning's discoursing. I shall simply continue to do so. I have remembered him with words; I shall now remember him with symbols. Both are of the same character as *expression*. Both are *a setting forth* of what we believe, and would feel. The symbol as *expression*, is no more solemn than the word. It means no more than the word. It binds no more than the word, if we inwardly believe and feel it; for no bond can be stronger than a man's inmost conviction and feeling.

With these views, I do not wish to make any solemn crisis in the service, to introduce that which follows; I do not wish to give any too especial an invitation to the Communion. When I say, "come to it," it is as when I rise to pray, I invite you to join me, and say, "let us pray." So I say now, "let us remember Christ in this manner." As many here, as truly desire, with convinced mind and earnest heart, to

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come, let them come. I disclaim, this Church disclaims the right to forbid any such. And yet I do not advise any to come for the first time, upon any sudden thought or impulse. With our modern protestant ideas upon this particular religious action, some, and perhaps, no little reflection is necessary, to bring our minds into a right state and determination with regard to it. My own reflection upon the subject, comes to this: here is an act of solemn and grateful *commemoration* — of the greatest and divinest being, that ever was in this world. If I regarded him only in this light, if I regarded him simply as the *divinest man*, I should feel that this act was fit and beautiful; more fit and beautiful than any of the commemorations of the great and wise and good, that ever have been in the world. It would be so to me, even if it were not commanded; even if it were an involuntary homage. If such a table were spread in the wilderness, and a few were gathered around it, and if I were passing by, a weary wanderer, I should feel drawn to join their company — to sit down with them, and to say, as I say now, "Jesus! Master, Teacher, Guide, Example, Friend — best friend, purest example, holiest teacher, guide through the wilderness of time, Master that leadest to heaven — so let me revere — so let me remember thee."

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XVI.

CHRIST INTELLIGIBLE AND IMITABLE.

JOHN vi. 35.—"And Jesus said unto them, I am the bread of life; he that cometh to me shall never hunger; and he that believeth on me shall never thirst."

I HAVE read to you for the morning lesson, a part of the sixth chapter of the Gospel of John, and to some passages in it, such as that which I have taken for my text, I wish now to invite your special attention. The passages I refer to, are those in which Jesus is represented as speaking of the value, importance and grandeur of his work; of his office and person, and of his relation to the world.

Let me here say, that in these discourses concerning the Christ, I am addressing myself to certain mistaken impressions, which prevail about him, without undertaking to discriminate between the genuineness of the three first Gospels, and the last. Here stands the record as the body of Christians receive it; and I propose to comment upon the ideas of the Christ, which they commonly derive from the general reading of it.

In the well known work, entitled "Ecce Homo," (behold the man,) the writer maintains, not merely that the *spirit* of the divine Master was destined to reign over the world, but that he would reign over men and be their king in such a sense that the highest personal allegiance to him, and a drawing of all spiritual

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life and power from him, would be the distinctive character of the true Christian man.

Now to this construction of the language of the New Testament, I do not assent. Believing that the spirit of Jesus is the example for his disciples, that his love and patience and self-sacrifice are to reign over men, I do not admit that he is the sovereign of the soul and of the spiritual world, in the sense contended for; such that it seems to exclude the supremacy of God himself. I think that this theory is at variance with the general strain of Christ's own teaching. I have another construction to offer of those passages in which Jesus is represented as speaking of his own truth and purity, of his claim to reliance and homage, and of his grand relation to the world; and as I have no doubt that these passages have troubled some, if not many thoughtful readers of the Gospels, I am the more disposed to take them up and consider them.

Indeed it is this general object which I have in view, rather than to controvert the particular ideas which are presented in "Ecce Homo." In many passages Jesus is certainly represented as speaking of himself in a very extraordinary manner, unlike that of any other teacher; with a self-assertion and self-commendation which conflict apparently with his general humility, and with our ideal of the unconsciousness and modesty of virtue.

The passages are such as these. "This is the work of God, that ye believe on him whom he hath sent." *Believing* on him, let us say, once for all, is a reverent and affectionate receiving of him. And consider how strong the language is. The *work of God* in the soul, the *highest thing*, the divinest, the godlike, is the hearty receiving, embracing, loving of Jesus Christ. These are strong words, but they are self-evidently

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true. They are true not in some theological sense, but simply as a matter of experience. If I ask my own mind, what is the highest elevation to which it can rise, what the nearest approach to God, I feel that it would be that *believing* of which Jesus speaks, that receiving, communing with him, that realizing of his ideal, that taking into my own heart the love and loveliness of his spirit. And therefore I can understand him when he says again, "And this is the will of him that sent me, that every one that seeth the Son and believeth on him, may have everlasting life." That is, "everlasting joy," not bare life of course, not bare continuance of being; the word life is figurative, and means the soul's life, the fulness of all good in the heart; it means beatitude, blessedness. He that believeth on me, hath not only blessedness, but everlasting blessedness.

But further; such a divine thing is this coming to Christ, that the *call* to it is all divine; the *disposition* to receive him, is *of God.* "No man can come to me except the Father draw him." Draw him, not with elective force, not with supernatural grace — a construction which weakens and mars the teaching — but with the drawing of love; i.e. only by love, love of God, will any one be drawn to me. As he goes on to explain it; "every man therefore that hath *heard* and hath *learned of the Father*, cometh unto me."

And all this he repeats and reiterates. "He that believeth on me, hath everlasting blessedness. I am that bread of life. I am the living bread that came down from heaven. Whoso eateth my flesh and drinketh my blood" — meaning by this, the most intimate participation of his spirit and life — "hath eternal joy. He that eateth my flesh and drinketh my blood, *dwelleth in me and I in him.*" *That* is the explana-

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tion. And when the people murmured among themselves, saying, how can this man give us his flesh to eat? and the disciples said, this is a hard saying; who can hear it? he replied it is the spirit that quickeneth, the flesh profiteth nothing. I am not speaking to you of literal flesh; the words that I speak to you, they are spirit, and they are life.

Are there none who murmur *now?*—none who repeat what the disciples of old said, "This is a hard saying"? I have met with such. One said *this* to me. "That I must love all goodness. That I must love the sum of all goodness, (which is God,) in order to be blessed eternally, this I can understand; but must I love, must I believe, receive, embrace by faith, this very person, or never find happiness, never attain to any thing good or blessed? Millions of heathens never heard of him; has no one of them ever attained to any spiritual blessing or blessedness?" Another said, "this frequent self-assertion of the Christ, this drawing of the attention to himself, this insisting upon his own nearness to the Father, and the Father's love and approbation of him, saying 'I do always those things that please him,' is this the fit and beautiful garb of virtue? We are accustomed to say, that the *highest* things in humanity,—genius, bravery, heroism, sanctity—are unconscious, unexacting, simply content to *be*. What then are we to think of this apparent self-consciousness of the Christ?"

Let one thing be borne in mind, as we pass to make reply to these natural suggestions, and I have no doubt, serious difficulties in some minds; and that is, that whatever Jesus claims for himself, he does always and explicitly refer to the Father, as the Giver of all. There is no want of modesty or humility, unless to be conscious of one's own rectitude at all, be such.

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In reply, then, the first observation I have to make, is, that this *consciousness* of the blessedness of rectitude, of the blessedness of love and purity in the heart, where that blessedness exists, is inevitable, and that the *utterance* of it, in certain relations, is natural. The *pride* of virtue, and the *joy* of virtue are very different things. Of the former there is not in Jesus, the slightest evidence: every thing he referred to God. But his *joy* was most intense; of that there is constant proof. *That* he utters, he declares in the strongest terms. Was it any derogation from his dignity, that he should do so? Why, the ordinary *Christian consciousness*, the *virtuous* consciousness of good men often takes this ground in relation to evil, to vice, and the misery of evil, of vice. It says — *not* "I am good;" so Jesus said, "why callest thou *me*, good?" — but it says, to all aberration and wandering from the right way, — "*my* course is happy, compared with *yours*." The Christian preacher, with such imperfect experience as he has, of the blessedness of piety and goodness, often kindles and glows with this theme, the blessedness of religion. The Christian parent expostulates with his erring son in the same terms. "You are seeking happiness," he says; "you will never find it in the path of wandering; come back to us; come to the simple way we taught you in your childhood; come back, poor wanderer, to the prayers you once made by your mother's side." And should not he who knew, as none other ever knew, the unutterable joy of purity, of love, of communion with the Father; who had that which all men are seeking, a sufficing joy in overflowing fulness — should not he say, "come unto me; come unto me, all ye that labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest; if any man thirst, let him come unto me and drink; whosoever

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drinketh of the waters of earthly pleasure, shall thirst again; but whosoever drinketh of the water that I will give him, shall never thirst"? It seems to me that it would be faithlessness to such a priceless trust, not to speak. It would be to hoard and lock up, not wealth, not knowledge — but a more precious treasure; and one for want of which the world is pining and perishing. Oh! no; one must speak — must utter forth and declare the joy of the Infinite Presence; else the very stones would cry out.

And let it be more distinctly considered, that Jesus came — *that* he frequently *says* — for this very end; to seek the wandering, to save the lost, to reform the world from its errors and corruptions, to make a new impress upon the human soul, of the loveliness and blessedness of things divine. He that has such a mission *must* stand forth, *must* assert himself, must put forward his personality into the contest, and reason with men — must say I and you, as Jesus did with the Jews. An earnest, large, sympathizing nature cannot content itself to speak in mere theses, mere general propositions, but must come into closer and more personal contact. The greatest natures have always shown this desire to communicate themselves, to impress their convictions on others, to make others sharers of their light and joy; great poets, great preachers, speak with this intent.

I am endeavoring, you perceive, to open to you the natural fountains in the mind of Jesus; and to show that as freely as any one ever uttered the great, swelling thoughts of his heart, so freely did he. We must not look upon him as a magisterial Instructor, as a mere official Teacher; the words, Messiah, Mediator, Redeemer, lead us too much to think merely of office and law and dispensation. But no; a living, loving

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heart breathed itself out, in the call, "come unto me, come to me, and I will give you rest." And that call is as vital now, and as needful now, as it ever was.

In the next place, I must observe, that as I read the Gospel, there was at the same time, a certain *im*personality in what Jesus says of himself. When he says, "come unto me, believe in me, receive me, else you perish," I understand him to speak not of himself merely as a certain person, but with a more general reference to himself as an embodiment of truth and light and life. He does not, as the language literally would imply — he does not, as I conceive, speak of his own personality as the ultimate object of all trust and love; for his design was to lead men to the Father. He means to say, as I understand him, that *that divine light* which shone in him, *such as that*, must be accepted of men, or there is no life in them. He generalizes that of which he is the example. Of this the following language is a remarkable instance. "For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life — i.e. everlasting blessedness. He that believeth on him is not condemned; but he that believeth not, is condemned already; because he believeth not in the name of the only begotten Son of God;" i.e. because he does not receive into his soul that divine light, that blessedness, of which I am the embodiment and example. And that this is a general representation, not appertaining to him as a person merely, but to the light that was in him, appears from what immediately follows. "And this is the condemnation, that light is come into the world — not that I have come, but that light is come into the world, and men loved darkness more than light, because their deeds were evil. For every one that doeth evil, hateth

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the light, neither cometh to the light, lest his deeds should be reproved. But he that doeth truth, cometh to the light, that his deeds may be made manifest that they are wrought in God."

These two observations which I have now made, are of more importance, I conceive, than may appear in the abstract statement. Jesus Christ, the Saviour of the world, speaks to men, speaks to us. It is of the last importance, that we should understand him, and fairly and truly receive the impression which his words should make upon us. If this impression is hindered by any misconstruction on our part, the utmost pains should be taken to remove it. This divine being is to impress us by his character, his life, his words, by the grandeur, nobleness, purity and loveliness of his character. If we feel that he unreasonably presses himself upon our attention, our faith or love, this feeling must thwart the very design of his coming. Let us understand then, but this; that here was a being, filled with the divinest goodness and sanctity; that he held in the bosom of his own experience, a treasure of inexpressible value to us; that *he* knew the secret of all welfare, and that for us to know it, is worth more than life; that it *is* life, peace, joy, blessedness unbounded and everlasting; and then, I ask, what call of his, what exhortation, what word of entreaty, could be too tender or earnest or urgent? Then can we not receive his solemn declaration, "he that believeth, he that receiveth into his heart the light and love that I have found, shall be saved, be blessed forever; and he that believeth not; he that rejecteth the living joy of faith and love, must be miserable. It is but the utterance of what is to-day true, and will be true forever. It is true whether Jesus had uttered it or not; it was true before he uttered it; it is forever true, that only he who receives into his

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heart a love and purity like that of Christ, can be saved, can be blessed. It is indeed a vital and momentous truth, but it is not an odious or dreadful truth; on the contrary, it is the very glory of our nature, that it cannot be happy in any other way.

But I must yet further observe, in the third place, that the lofty language in which Jesus spoke of himself, cannot be altogether understood, without supposing that he regarded himself as raised up and appointed to hold a peculiar relation to our humanity. No prophet, no moral teacher ever uttered such words as *he* did, concerning his relation to the whole world. If he is looked upon but as other prophets and teachers, his language would seem in some cases to be unbecoming and presumptuous. "I am come a light into the world. And I, if I be lifted up, will draw all men unto me. Neither pray I for these alone, but for those that shall believe on me, through their word. Go and convert all nations, baptizing them into the name — i.e. the acknowledgment of the Father, and of the *Son*, and of the Holy Ghost."

"And I, if I be lifted up, will draw all men unto me." What words were these, for one about to die on the cross! Only a thought which by divine right, took possession of the ages beforehand, could utter such words. What a supernatural, what a wonderful, what a sublime confidence was this! A Hebrew teacher — of but the humblest account among his people; and that the most despised and hated of all people; one whom this very nation, his own nation, was about to reject and cast out, as unworthy to live, who foresaw that he was doomed to suffer as a convict, a malefactor, and the lowest of malefactors, doomed to the most ignominious and bitter death, whom the public law was about to strike with opprobrium; at whom the rabble

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was to jeer in derision, and the chief men, the highest men in the country, were to exclaim in wrath, "crucify him, crucify him!" — he, I say, solitary, forsaken, smitten — with all the world against him, all earth darkening around him, and dark thoughts too in his own soul, which broke out in the sorrowful soliloquy, "now is my soul troubled, and what shall I say?" — yet what does he say? How calmly does he reason! Socrates too reasoned, and said to his friends — "death is not to be dreaded; it may lead to a higher life; let us hope for it." But what did Jesus say? "Father, the hour is come, and I come to thee." And then, I repeat, how calmly did he reason, and with what a lofty thought! "Except a corn of wheat fall into the ground and die, it abideth alone: but if it die, it bringeth forth much fruit." And then, looking through, looking above, looking beyond that dark hour, he says, "and I, if I be lifted from the earth, will draw all men unto me."

And how have all the ages since, answered back to that astonishing expectation! Strong as the language of Jesus is, concerning himself, his mission, and his place in the world, history has sanctioned it, to the very letter. Read and ponder the contrasted portions of that history. Its beginning is the despised Judæa, termed by Roman pride and in the Roman speech of that day, "a scowl upon the face of the world." Yes, in Judæa, eighteen hundred years ago, walked by her humble waysides, a being who has not only been, through all these centuries, the most revered and exalted among men, but who has set up in the world, a new idea, a new order of greatness; one whose life was of such solemn and majestic significance that every act and word of his, is familiarly told in these far off centuries; that every incident and person connected

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with him, — the circumstances of his birth, his youthful visit to the temple, the humble names of his friends, the woman at the well of Samaria, the night-shade of Gethsemane, the traitorous kiss, the vainly washen hands of the wavering Pilate, the tears of Peter, the crown of thorns and the prayer of the thief upon the cross — all rise into stupendous interest and grandeur. Nothing did he touch, but it has assumed a character of greatness. Down upon the stream of ages, have been borne the memorials of his life and death, of his birth and passion. In all the cultivated nations of the world, holy days and times and seasons have commemorated all that he did, and said, and suffered. And it is no artificial homage. Deep into the hearts of millions upon millions have sunk the words that he uttered. Before the ignominious cross, the very symbol of his humiliation, have multitudes kneeled, and bathed it with their tears. And Jerusalem, through whose streets he once walked — Jerusalem that sitteth solitary among the nations, — who of us that could visit its lonely towers, who of us that could enter its neglected gates, would not be glad to prostrate himself upon the earth and to kiss the very ground, that was once trodden by the feet of the Son of God? Well then did he say — "And I, if I be lifted up, will draw all men unto me."

But this is not all. Jesus Christ bears a relation not only to the ages, but to the individual soul. Every soul is an epitome of the world. It is not only the witness, but the conscious partaker of human weal and woe. The interests of *humanity* are vast: the course of the *ages* is majestic; but the world, the ages, the great burden of humanity, the strugglings of all human need, and weakness, and weariness, and sorrow and erring, are in *me*. I am a world to myself. And how-

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ever I may speculate about the world's destiny, I can feel no destiny so intensely or so awfully, as I feel that which is embosomed in the over-shadowed depths of my own nature. And with this great burthen weighing upon me, what am I? Poor, weak, frail, erring, sinning, suffering — and liable to suffer, what and how long, I know not.

Now suppose that Jesus had never lived in the world. The ages have rolled on: the present hour has come; and I live, amidst the unnumbered millions that live, but with a need and sorrow as vast and individual, as if there were none to share them with me. I am in darkness; or I am one, suppose, that has strayed from the better path. I have plunged into sin and misery and despair. I have lived for a pampered body; and the corrupted body has imprisoned me in its dungeon; or I have broken the laws of society, and crime has imprisoned me in a literal dungeon. The lights have all gone out from my life; for me there is none to help, none to save; for me there is no God, nor heaven, nor mercy nor hope. And now suppose that some pure soul, some heaven-sent friend, some minister of God's pity, should come to me — from earth or from heaven; it is not material — that he should take a tender and generous interest in me; that he should speak to me encouraging words, take me by the hand and lift me up, tell me and persuade me to believe that God has pity for me, breathe from his own loving heart, the word, *Father*, into mine ear, convince me that I was made not to be a child of despair, but a child of God. Suppose that thus laboring with me, thus talking and praying with me — throwing his helping and loving arms around me, he should at length lift me up — lift up my sinning and despairing soul, and raise me from darkness and from the horrible pit, and

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carry me forth to the light of day, where the heavens should be bright around me and the earth beautiful — where as I looked around me, I should see a new world; and as I looked upward, I should see new heavens — ay, an immortality of joy, opening before me: — what a deliverance would that be! Oh! the words were never found, the mortal speech was never framed, that could set forth the joy of that deliverance! And suppose further, that this pure and noble friend had taken infection from that noisome dungeon where he found me, and had died to save me! What could ever be — what love, what saintliness, what loveliness, what sacrifice, what canonized suffering could ever be to me, like that! What memory could there be in all the world, like that! I do not desire to separate the death of Jesus from every other death endured for the righteous cause. He himself said, "the works that I do, ye shall do." Every sufferer for the right, every martyr for truth, dies for human virtue, dies for the world; but Jesus stands at the head of all.

Such is the office of Christ, the Saviour, to all who are truly touched, penetrated, regenerated, by his word, his patience, his passion and his victory: and such is the memory of him in the world, through all ages. It is a natural claim. It is natural, simple, reasonable. I desire it to be no other to any man. That is what I have sought to show you. I desire no factitious or forced homage to this most divine, most human excellence. Can you believe that that sublime image of suffering and love, has been before the world — has been impressed upon the world, for eighteen centuries, without the ordaining providence and will of God? Can you believe that all the signs and wonders of the early time, all the words spoken by this wonderful Being, all his conscious relation to the whole human

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race, should have been meant for less than to penetrate through the world, to penetrate to *us;* to touch all hearts with that living patience and dying sorrow?

And it has penetrated the hearts of millions unnumbered, and in a manner so remarkable, as to vindicate the astonishing expectation of the crucified Sufferer and Lord. Other great teachers — Sakya Muni, Zoroaster, Confucius — have been reverenced and held in remembrance; but no other being that ever wore the human form, has been so beloved. How deep and tender that feeling has been, is evinced by what is told of an aged man, who lay upon his dying bed, whose failing faculties had ceased to retain any recognition, even of his family and nearest friends. He was asked if he knew one and another; and his answer was "no, I do not know them." At length the question was put, "do you know Jesus Christ?" "Oh! yes" — he exclaimed the last consciousness gleaming through his fading eyes — "Oh! yes, he is my Saviour!" It is the last glad cry of Christian faith, when dust descends to dust. It answers back to the great words uttered eighteen centuries ago — "I am the resurrection and the life; he that believeth in me, shall never die."

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XVII.

THE OLD AND THE NEW.

2 Cor. v. 17. — "Therefore, if any man be in Christ, he is a new creature; old things are passed away: behold, all things are become new."

To be "in Christ," we read here, is to be "a new creature." When the Romans freed a slave, they said, "he is born again." So Jesus said, in a religious sense, thou must be "born again," must be a new creature. To be in Christ, the Christ life in the soul, is a new life to the common experience of men; new motive, new power, new patience and victory. But now in that new life, old things will pass away. Creation implies dissolution; the old dies in giving birth to the new. So we see it in the processes of nature. As St. Paul said, "that which thou sowest, is not quickened, except it die." Life springs from death. And so it is not contrary to the analogies of *nature*, that life immortal should spring from the grave. When the spirit is born into that future life, the body is left behind, like an old and worn-out garment. And so, in the progress of the religious life *here*, old things are left behind, the old things that pertain to our spiritual childhood, ignorance, imperfect development — the old things of the Jewish dispensation, perhaps Paul meant — *they* pass away; but not the essential realities of truth and faith. *They* abide forever. They are things that are new and forever new.

This is the point of view, from which I wish now to

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speak. The old in religion dies out, the old error, the old dispensation, the old superstition; but not the old religion; this is forever new and forever fresh. For this, there is no decline, no decay; for it is the life of God in the soul. Upon this no darkness, no night-shade is to fall; religion is the soul's everlasting day. Moods of mind, modes of experience, no doubt, pass away; but not the vital and precious experience itself. Thus, institutions, usages, customs, the means that minister to humanity, decline and die; but humanity does not die. And so, kingdoms fall; but that kingdom of God, of which it is said that it is within you, never falls.

This is the nature of all progress. Compare youth with manhood, or manhood with age; compare the earlier with the maturer periods of thought, of knowledge, of opinion, of faith or creed; and always it will be found, where there is a real progress, that some things drop off and fall away, and that better things come in their place.

But this encouraging view of things, is what a timid conservatism cannot accept; and it is notable to see how many minds, in these days, are disturbed by anxiety, distrust, and alarm at the new developments of opinion in religion, and in science and politics as well. It is *not* against a reasonable conservatism, but against this great and anxious distrust, that I would now speak.

The point which I am to insist on, is one of great interest, I think, to the views we entertain of our highest life and welfare as individuals, and of the highest life and welfare of the world. These are the aspects of the subject, under which I shall consider it; and in both respects I say, we are apt to be discouraged without cause.

Look at individual life. There is a youth of reli-

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gious experience; and how many have I known, who, because it was a season of great excitement, looked back upon that as their best time, and lamented its departure. There is a youth of religious experience; full of emotion, full of joy, or, it may be, full of concern, full of doubt and fear. Oh! it is not strange that upon the opening and entrance into life, when the mind first awakes from thoughtless childhood, and looks around it, and begins to look reality in the face — it is not strange that there should come down upon this young life, the awe of the question, what am I? — whither am I going? — what is to become of me? — what shall I do to be saved? But time goes on; experience deepens; questions are struggled with and settled; and the soul sinks into deep and calm assurance. It *knows* now, what it only *believed* before. *Now* God is not a Being to be sought only in morning and evening prayers; but his presence is an abiding reality. Jesus Christ speaks to his thought, as never man spake. The life of the soul, is more to him, than all other life.

It may be in old age, that all this is most felt. It may be in old age, that a man more truly *lives*, than he ever lived before. The body decays; the limbs tremble with weakness; the eye grows dim; the ear is dull of hearing; but it is not so with the life within. There all is fresh and strong; ay, and perhaps joyous and gay. The work of life is done, and well that it is done; the battle is fought, and it was a good fight — so Paul found it; the affections have freer play than they had amidst the strife and turmoil of life; the things that are divine, are more real and sure than ever; earth recedes, with all its little interests and anxieties, and heaven is opening and widening to the view.

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There is a youth of *life* too, as well as of religion, concerning which the same mistake is made. For there is an idea of youth as the only good time, as the especially happy period of life. It is an idea, I will venture to say, which needs the correction of a wiser thought; I might say of a higher civilization of mind and thought. It properly belongs to the older ages; it is the uncultured, unspiritualized, barbaric idea, which sums up all the good of life in thews and sinews, in health and beauty, in animal spirits, in the excitements and enjoyments of pleasure and passion. All common speech, you know, all poetry, all essay-writing, is full of that idea. They give the undisputed palm to youth, and sigh for the possibility of bringing it back again. The treasures of experience, which a life-time has gathered, — stored knowledge, ripened wisdom, strengthened faith and purified love, seem to be of no account, and quite unthought of, in comparison. It is as if the mature man, trained, taught, learned, accomplished, wide-reaching in his grasp, full of all that makes the highest life, should look back to the impulsiveness and ignorance of childhood as the best time. No, there are better things in life, than childhood or youth ever knew. Doubtless, old age has its disadvantages; not in having more sickness and pain; for I doubt whether in the average experience of life, this is true. But doubtless there are things that grow old and pass away, the vigor, the beauty, the passions, ay, and follies too, of early life; but these are not the greatest things, nor the best, nor the happiest things, in our being. I would not give up, may the aged say, the views I now have of life and life's welfare, the results of thought and experience, the ideas of religion that have been growing clearer, and brighter and brighter to me,

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every year of my life, the ideas of God, and of the great and good Providence over the world and the universe — no, I would not give them up, for all that restored youth could bring back to me. So all worldly enjoyments are of the things that pass away. Usage and familiarity wear them out. The only way to relish them at all, the only means by which they can be made to satisfy the passing hour, is to vary and increase and intensify them. "More, more," the thirsty soul says; "more pleasure, and ever increased variety in it; more praise, and yet more of it; more gold, more splendor of apparel and garniture; more drink, more feasting;" till by and by, excess "cloys the hungry edge of appetite;" repetition dulls enjoyment; pleasure palls; and gold grows dim to the aged and dying eyes. But there are things which no repetition can ever render dull; no familiarity, tame; no excess, a surfeit. These are the things that are great and divine — truth, goodness, Love and Perfection Infinite. This is the stronghold of our very nature upon progress, upon happiness, upon immortality.

For if the things that take hold of the highest in us, of the very religion of our being, were to decline in power the more we study them; if they must share the fate of a world that is passing away, immortality itself would be no blessing, but utter misery. And on the contrary, it is no mean argument for our immortality, that religion, that pure and holy affection, is the one thing in the soul which is ever fresh, ever young, ever growing in beatitude and beauty; and that from the crumbling edge of this world, from the borders of the grave, rise the most impassioned yearnings for a higher life beyond.

I am speaking now, and first, of individual experience. I insist that what in us is the best of us,

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never grows old; that seventy years do not, nor would a thousand or million years, bring any dulness or decay into the life divine; that there is this grand and marked peculiarity in our being, this ever fresh unfolding, this looking out to immortality: as the sphinx — a human head on an animal body — has been said to be "animalism looking out to humanity," so in *our* sphinx-like mystery of body and soul, is humanity looking out to some unrealized and nobler being. There are old things that pass away; but they are temporary and transient ministries to the spirit's enduring life: as, in nature, the bark and husk, which decay and fall off, are nourishing and protecting an ever fresh growth within.

But what then, is all this that we hear, about dulness in religion — more about dulness alas! in religion, than in any thing else? What is this coldness and dearth in churches and congregations, of which so much complaint is made? What is this dying out of religion in some individual minds? Old things pass away, and *nothing* becomes new. Some persons seem to outgrow their religion, and come to look upon it as a youthful illusion. Some who were piously educated, become sceptics, materialists, even Atheists. There are those who rationalize themselves into absolute coldness and death. They reason away one thing after another that they once believed, till nothing is left. Some fall away from all Church relations, or rid themselves of all bonds to sect and creed, and are accounted to have no religion at all.

What, I repeat, is to be said of all this? Two things. One is, that those who have fallen away from all the religion they ever had, never *had* any, worth the name. They have been catechised and worried into religion, or driven into it by fear, accepting it, perhaps with

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selfish joy, merely as a refuge from perdition, or they have taken it as a prescription from their spiritual guides, without having been led, in either case, to understand its nature, or to see and feel the true and rational grounds of it. As it is with knowledge, so it may be with religion. The pupil may be so taught, and *is* sometimes so taught in our schools, as never to be inspired with the true love of knowledge; and his books and lessons are flung away, when they are done with, as a burthen and weariness. Old things have passed away, and there is nothing in him, to become new.

The other thing to be said, is this; that much may pass away from religion, and instead of its being impaired, it may be strengthened by the change. What has fallen off, having served its purpose for the time, has left it unshackled for a freer and fresher growth. Bondage, in the world's religion, was inevitable, and had its uses; but freedom is better and stronger. As Paganism was succeeded by Judaism, and Judaism by Christianity, and religion has been ever growing in vigor and purity; so may it be with individual experience. A man may become freer from sectarian bonds, from creed-worship, and from Bible-worship; and all the while, more profoundly interested in vital religion; less and less, a Calvinist, a Presbyterian, a Methodist or an Episcopalian, and more and more a Christian. He may become large enough to embrace all in his charity, and to transcend all in his devotion and earnestness. For, of this I am sure, that with every true, sincere and thoughtful man, religion, the love of God and of all that is godlike, sinks ever deeper and deeper into the roots of his being.

I have said that the relation between the old and the new, which I am endeavoring to set forth in this dis-

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course, has regard, as to individual life, so also to the views we entertain of the highest life and welfare of the world. Let us look a little, so far as the time may serve, into this broader field.

The world is troubled and anxious about *itself*. It is a sick world, and needs some healing hand. It is a disordered world, and wants peace. And *now*, especially; for now are coming into the world — unlooked for, I believe, by most persons — now are coming, nay and *have* come, political troubles, huge strides of immorality especially in the quest of gain, and alarming scepticism in religion. Old systems are crumbling to pieces on every side, as, I think, they never were before. Question, doubt, scepticism, it is true, have always been in the world; but they never went to the roots of things, as they do now.

But I am not willing to let doubts or fears press upon my mind, or yours, as a disheartening burthen. I believe that all we fear, and rightly fear, is to come out well. I believe that the power of good, in God's world, is greater than the power of evil; and therefore I look, not for the destruction, but for the building up of order, virtue, and religion in the days that are to come. He who does not expect himself to see those days; he who is standing upon the verge of life, cannot lose his interest in the world he is leaving; and if he can say any thing, however little it may be, that leans to good hope of the future, I deem that it may be fitly, though modestly, spoken, as his parting word. I have always thought that I should like to preach in old age — to stand up and speak, in the decay of life, of that which never decays — which is becoming forever new, while all things else die and pass away. I did not know precisely what I should wish to say; but I have been led lately, in my meditations, to put down some words to say, which I am now asking you to hear.

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Old things pass away; and yet all things become new. This is my theme; and I am now to apply it in a larger view. Decadence, difficulty, trouble always enter into this world's affairs; but I believe in a happy issue. And especially there are three grand interests which are always thought to be in peril, but which I believe, are ultimately secure; there are three things on which, in fact, the welfare of the world reposes; on political justice, on social virtue, and religious faith. They all stand in the one central principle, that they are true; that they have in them, the common element and essence of what is right; and neither of them can prosper, if either fails.

First, then let us say a word of political justice; for without it neither morality nor religion have any fair chance in the world. Justice is an attribute of God. It is, as among men, always a sacred thing; but its claim becomes more urgent, when a whole people, when a nation demands it. And there can be no proper justice to a nation, unless its opinion, its will, and its interests are represented, by suffrage, in the Government. This truth is fast coming to be recognized in the whole civilized world. The old, arbitrary, unquestioned rule over men, of one or of a few, is passing away. What is to come in its place? How will the new, the free system work? This is the great political question now. And upon this question, men's minds are divided. Our own example is deeply distrusted by many thoughtful men abroad. It was this which turned away from us, the hearts of many persons in England, in our great and terrible civil war. They did not wish this Republic to stand. They thought the experiment, one of evil omen to the world. And although the result is disappointing them, and encouraging us, thank God! still among ourselves, there are not wanting those, who

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distrust our free system. I know very well what it is to feel some anxiety on this subject, for I have felt it all my life. But I feel it less and less: and for these reasons. First, because the free system is founded in justice. It is not right, that one man, a hereditary monarch, or that several men, an aristocracy, should, at their sole pleasure, set up a government, or prescribe laws for a whole people. It is no more right than it would be for a self-constituted proprietor to divide and assign all the property of the people, at his pleasure — taking for himself what he pleases, and giving to every other man in the community, what he pleases. There are other things precious, besides property: life, liberty, education, the pursuit of happiness, and the common and natural claims to respect and influence; and when I say that all this should be committed, not to a few irresponsible persons, but to the common judgment of the whole body of the people, I plant myself on the foundation of obvious and eternal Right, which it is the tendency and law of the Will Divine, to set up and establish.

Secondly, I entertain a calm and undisturbed confidence in the ultimate prevalence and triumph of this just system of government, because the actual political experience of nations through ages, has been tending to this point. Government began with chieftainship, with despotism of the strong over the weak; because the weak had neither power nor courage to resist. As the consciousness of *mankood* grew in men, as light broke in, limitation of the sovereign power has marked every step of progress; till a limited monarchy, as it is in England, and will be more and more in Italy and Germany and Russia, is made compatible with popular representation in the government. And now when the last great nation is built up upon these shores, it

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is a Republic pure and simple. Can any one suppose that this free system, the growth, the outcome of the advancing ages, is to sink into the abyss of ruin?

I know that there are difficulties. We are feeling them ourselves. There are difficulties in the way of settling our national affairs into peaceful order, since the war. There are especial difficulties in the government of cities. But they are not irremediable. There is a remedy, if the people will only seek and apply it. It lies in themselves, in their own spirit and conduct. Let not what I say be thought to be a commonplace abstraction, a mere sentiment, of no avail to meet the case. We are accustomed, I know, in a general way, to admit that education, intelligence and virtue are necessary in a free State; but the remedy I speak of is more specific, and lies deeper. There is, I venture to maintain, a new view of citizenship, of what *it is* to be good members of a free community, which has never yet been well and truly considered. We are not yet educated *up* to a due sense of the charge and responsibility which we have taken upon us. The notions we have of our relations to the government, are notions inherited from the past; when the government did what it pleased, and all that the people had to do, was to submit; all it had to do, was to pay taxes and keep the peace. *We*, in this country, have infinitely more to do; to take upon our very hearts a feeling for the common weal; to take a brotherly part with all our fellow-citizens in the political ordering of things; to study and learn our civic duties; to attend primary meetings, to vote, to serve on juries, all of us, rich or poor, high or low; to let no particle of influence or efficiency we possess, be wanting to the common weal and work. There are a great many people among us, especially of the rich, and some of the educated, who

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live as if they had nothing to do, but to gather property, or to get their books around them, and enjoy their good fortune; and to let who will, take care of the commonwealth. It will never do. It may do for men living under arbitrary rule; but for *our* society it will never do. It is an altogether false idea of life, in a free and self-governed society.

And all this should be taught from our pulpits: and should be taught in our schools. See what was done in the Southern schools, before the war. The Southern doctrine of State Rights was assiduously taught in them. The public mind was thus prepared for disunion. The instruction was framed to meet that exigency. Now let the youth of the whole country be taught another, a deeper and greater thing. Let them be taught that true republican citizenship involves a perpetual exigency; that the bond of conscience can no more safely be taken off from political life, than it can from private life. It *can* be taught; it *must* be taught; and the time must come, I believe, when it *will* be taught. I trust the common sense of human nature for *that*. The time when it is rightly taught and thoroughly felt, and acted upon, may be far off; but it will come.

But next to political self-government, as a subject for anxious consideration, is personal self-government; in other words, the morals of society, the conduct of private life. To make a society of true, temperate, honest, good and loving men—this is what we want done, and almost despair of. How is it to be done? Not by associations, not even by churches, but by every man's watch and care for himself. Or if there must be associations, as there are, now, for almost every thing, I would that we could see, for once, an association, ay, or a church, of Honest Men; of men *binding*

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themselves in every action of their lives — in barter and trade, in buying and selling — to be honest; to speak the word that is true, to do the thing that is right. To be *honest*, I say; cost what it will; to stake every thing upon *that*.

On what high and holy ground to stand, would this be! Down in low levels far beneath this, too many are scrambling for gratifications of selfishness, pride, sensuality, and especially for that which ministers to all — for gain. This universal haste to be rich — to be rich, as the best thing on earth — is it to stride over, and master the world? I do not believe it. I do not believe that this golden calf is to stand and be worshipped, as it now is, beneath the awful heights of truth and righteousness that are to spread over the coming time. Even education, the common enlightenment of men's minds, will dissolve and break it in pieces. It is not the most thoughtful, reflective, cultivated class that is possessed with this madness for accumulation. Coarser faculties are content to be absorbed in that. As men think more, read more, gain more knowledge, range amidst the delights of good learning, of art, poetry, music, works of genius, they will see that there is something better than goods and gains; and the avaricious passions will die out of them.

Gain for a livelihood, or for any good ends, is one thing; but gain for gain's sake, is another: and this, I believe, is among the old things that will pass away. It must, if men ever come to know what they are, or for what end they were made. They will not always think it well, or enough, to concentrate all the activity of a rational and immortal nature, upon putting a few more pence or pounds into the till or purse. It will yet seem to be foolish and intolerable, to live for that alone; yet more to live dishonestly for that. To sacrifice every

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thing for gain, — principle, honor, conscience, every thing for gain, will yet be seen to be insufferable folly; to sacrifice every thing for conscience, the grandest wisdom.

Do I seem now to be talking of abstractions, which do not come home to us? When a man stands by his desk or in his grain-field, and some transaction of business is before him, and the question is, — shall I contrive or represent things so as to gain ten or a hundred or a thousand dollars by dishonesty; or shall I stand true to the right, true to my inmost convictions, though fortune falls, though the heavens fall, is that an abstraction? I tell you we shall see more and more men, who in that keen, cutting trial of their souls, will stand by the right. It is said, there are fewer such men, now. It may be so, for the hour; in this great outburst of universal free action; with new methods and schemes of accumulation, devised by unscrupulous men. Great prizes are in the lottery-wheel of business, and there are great rogues to snatch them. But these false ideas of wealth — of wealth as better than worth, of wealth as the chief good — will not always prevail. Men must — educated, thoughtful men, conscious of what they are, must see where their welfare lies, what the true end of their being is; and the time shall be, when the world will be an association of honest men.

And now, in fine, if neither despotic government nor mean and hateful dishonesty can live and thrive in the face of reason and right, if it is the tendency of all just thinking to put them down, is there any reason to fear that Religion will decline, and die out in the world?

Yet there are those who fear it, or who, at least, are troubled with anxieties upon this point. So many old

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things have passed away; so many old ideas, old ways of thinking, old traditional beliefs, are slipping from men's minds, that conservative persons are tempted to ask, whether any thing will be left.

Indeed, no thoughtful man can have watched the progress of *scientific* investigations for the last few years, without being concerned at their bearing upon our primary religious beliefs. Yet after all, suppose the scientific theories to be established; what do they amount to? They claim to go back to the origin, and trace the evolution of life upon this globe. They hold that all life has proceeded from certain original germs implanted in nature; or that a certain substance called protoplasm, is the germ or basis of all life; or even that the forces of nature produce life, without germ or protoplasm—what is called "spontaneous generation." Well, suppose it all, or any of it, to be true. What has all this to do with the Cause? It is all *modus operandi*, method or order of the creation, not Cause. It does not, in the least, preclude me from seeing Intelligence, Wisdom, Goodness shining *through* all forms, through germ and protoplasm, through all the forms of nature.

Not to see it, is to be blind. It is as if, when a human mind is speaking to me through bodily organs, I should see nothing but the bodily organs. The mind is a fact, as truly as the tongue or brain is. Intelligence in nature is a fact, as certain and manifest as visible nature is. And then, as to this human mind, concerning whose origin and derivation people distress themselves; what has its derivation to do with what it is? What if my predecessor were an ape, in the long procession of ranks and orders of being, from mollusk to man? Still I am a man. No matter *how*—i.e., in what order of events, I became such; still I am the

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same. And this same, this being that I am — it offends me to have it hustled in with the rubbish of materialism, or the senselessness of blind agency. Beyond all that matter is capable of, or animals ever knew, here is something, in you, and in me — how shall I express it! — a thought, an aspiration, a want, a sorrow, a yearning for immortality; and uplifted hands, a crying out for God, for the living God! All this has for its counterpart, religion. The one cannot be, unless the other is.

Can any one believe that this surging up of humanity to the highest, is to sink down into the void and inane, where nothing is — destined to fulfil nothing better than the dark prophecies of materialism and atheism? Can this be the end? That mark of progression which is upon every thing else in man — upon his reason, his education, his love of knowledge, upon the science he so ardently pursues — that mark of progression, I say, is it to be erased from the very crown he wears upon his brow — his religion? Is he to be discrowned, and cast down, and sent forth, a blind wanderer and outcast, without God, without hope?

And who *is* it, that says this? Not the religious man, but the irreligious, who professes to have no religion, and to want none. Is this a fit person to decide upon such a point? We ask experts, not *in*experts, to judge of things. Suppose an ignorant person were to say to educated and learned men, "your education of which you think so much; your science which you pursue so eagerly, is all an illusion, yet to die out of the world;" would they think much of his opinion? And so, when irreligious sceptics, learned or worldly-wise, tell us that religion is to die out, we can't think much of it. There is a foolish talk I sometimes hear, about faith's having been greater in the dark, middle

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ages, than it is now: credulity, it should be called. Faith, true faith deepens, as thought, reasoning, feeling, the heart's great searching, goes deeper. It is so, to-day. As knowledge grows, as culture advances, there are more and more men, whose souls are fraught full with a swelling and undying sense of religion; who seek after God, after the living God; and feel that all the interest of life is gone, if that great and all-hallowing Presence is gone from the world.

No; religions may die out of the world, but not religion. Forms, usages, false ideas of religion have changed and will change, but not the central reality. There is *yet*, much of what is *called* religion in the world, which, I have no doubt, will die out of it. I hope it will. I listen to ideas of religion, dishonoring to reason and to God; I listen to *prayers*, which I believe will pass away, when all things become new; when a profounder veneration, and a more awestruck sense of what it *is* to pray, will come in place of the formality, the facile routine, the irreverent freedom of too much of our Church praying. "Behold," said an ancient patriarch, "I have taken upon me to speak unto God! Oh! let not the Lord be displeased, and I will speak." "Do you know what you are *doing?*"—I am sometimes moved to say to the mere official priest, uttering words of rote and custom—"do you know what it *is* to speak unto God; to lift your thoughts to Him, whose Omnipotence, and whose Omniscience are spread over all the uncounted millions of stars, and countless millions more, it may be, as yet unseen, that roll and shine in the boundless infinitude beyond?"

And yet, if any scientific philosopher tells me that such an incomprehensible Existence must be merely an unknown Cause, a blank abstraction to our minds; if he tells me that affectionate devotion, that adoring

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love, cannot rise to such inconceivable Greatness, I answer — is it necessary to know any thing *wholly*, in order to love it — any attribute, power or person? To how many, is the highest genius, art or learning, on *earth*, beyond their reach to comprehend! Yet do they not gaze upon its creations with delight? So, if God's greatness is beyond my reach to comprehend, yet, for the very reason that it is infinite, it embraces *me;* it is near me to understand or feel. I touch the circle of Infinitude, though I cannot span it; and the least arc of the circle is like the whole. The light that streams in at my window is lovely, though I cannot see its boundless shining. And why may I not say, God's presence is lovely, though I cannot comprehend its infinitude? What a fool were a man to say, he could not admire the beautiful ocean-bay he looked upon, with its bending shore and green mounds swelling around it, because he could not see the whole ocean! Nay, it is more beautiful, because it is part of the great whole.

I know God in his works. If the written page of a book expresses to me a mind, doth not this boundless volume of the creation, in which intelligence is manifest, as plainly as in a book? If a human countenance shines and kindles all over with love, doth not — to him who can truly look into it — the face of nature, living, lovely, loving? how entrancing is the vision of its beauty! how manifold and wonderful the Wisdom beaming from every feature of it — every flower and tree, every mountain and valley speaking to him — and all filled with myriad and joyous life, from the fluttering insect, up through all animal forms, to man — and man himself made to behold all this wonder, all this loveliness, this beneficence? My gaze, as I look upon the earth and sky, the vision of my soul, meets a

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vision, a manifestation, an infinitude of Goodness. I see — I do not merely believe — I see, I know, that an Infinite Love reveals itself, through all life, all nature, all being.

I have attempted, brethren, to speak to you of this great assuring trust, of this great faith of our being; alas! with the old sense of failure to speak of it fitly. But because it is inexpressible, it is none the less assuring. There is something in us, too deep for words; a sense of the all-divine and beautiful, which is its own assurance of being true and unfailing; something which will never die, while any thing lives in us. No, it will not die. No, it will not die. Greatly says the Apostle, "for I am persuaded, that neither death nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor powers, nor things present nor things to come, nor height nor depth, nor any thing else, shall be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord." Sound out, eternal anthem! — "great and marvellous are thy works, Lord God Almighty; just and true are thy ways."

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BASIS AND SUPERSTRUCTURE.

AN ADDRESS BEFORE THE MINISTERIAL CONFERENCE, MAY 29, 1867.

BRETHREN OF THE CONFERENCE, — I shall venture to speak to you in this discourse on subjects that belong to the time. This opens, doubtless, too large a field to enter, without some definite path to pursue, or some distinct points of view being taken from which to survey it; and I hasten to say at once, that the few thoughts I have to offer will come chiefly under the heads of Basis and Superstructure, — of the foundation in religion and the upbuilding. These themes present a framework of thought too vast, indeed, for discussion, and designed only to limit it. But I desire to look at this great edifice of religion, — to "go round about Zion, and to mark well her bulwarks;" both because of the dangers that seem to assail it, and because I am sure of its stability. Never, certainly, was every thing in religion called in question, from the lowest foundation to the topmost stone, as it is now; and yet never, I firmly believe, was there so much true religious faith in the world as now. If this seems to be a contradiction, I do not understand it to be so: because the foundation-truths of religion, though they are questioned, are questioned by comparatively few; while the general faith is gravitating towards them more and more, is taking deeper hold of the very roots of religion, and is, therefore, becoming stronger and more

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vital. Very scepticism to-day is often more vitally religious, than was the old Orthodox believing of the Middle Ages; whose stability is so much vaunted by some, and whose decadence is so unnecessarily lamented over by others. I think that I see the general mind sinking deeper and deeper into the truest religious convictions, through the rents of controversial theology, through the chinks of Biblical historic evidence, and the breaking-up of ecclesiastical authority.

I have known well enough what it is to doubt; and to doubt concerning the whole dogmatic creed in which I was brought up. I once gave a year to retirement and study to examine this creed. I examined it; I gave it up, point by point: but never for one moment did I lose my peace of mind. I knew, or thought at least, that my earthly prospects were endangered by my inquiries; but my inmost tranquillity and deepest joy were never for a moment disturbed by all my doubts and difficulties. And why? Because I felt something within me — an assurance, a certainty — that lay beneath all doubts, beneath all dogmatic creeds. Nay, I say it firmly, that beneath not only all dogmatic creeds, but beneath all writings, beneath all Scriptures, beneath all church ordinance and authority, beneath Christianity, beneath the mission of the Christ himself, there is, in the solemn recesses of every human soul, a foundation of religion and religious truth. Jesus himself spoke to that inner, that diviner sense of things; else as a religious teacher he could not have spoken at all. And if I be reminded that Paul says, "Other foundadation can no man lay than that is laid, which is Jesus Christ," I answer, this is *true* of the Christian system. Jesus Christ *is* the foundation of that. But that system reposes on a foundation beneath it, — the everlasting truth that underlies all religions. When it is said

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that an architect lays the foundation of a building, — temple, tower, or pyramid, — it is forgotten, perhaps, that this rests on a deeper and broader foundation, the foundation and basis of the world.

I hardly know why I should insist upon this position with any special strength of statement. It is the simple and acknowledged truth, I think, in our religious philosophy. Certainly it is in every other. All knowledge, all science, rests upon an original basis in human nature. All art, all perception and culture of the beautiful, is referred to an original sense of beauty in the human soul. When we speak of the most remarkable instances of human development; when we speak of Shakspeare, we are thinking of the wonder of his genius more than of his culture, or means of culture. And even if we were, with the utilitarian philosophers, — not all dead *yet*, — to refer all moral and religious sentiments to sensation connected with the love of happiness, low as the basis would be compared with the grand primal intuitions of humanity, we should still point to the original constitution of human nature. I am not denying, by any means, the importance of culture, of the upbuilding: of this I shall come to speak. I am not denying that the capacity would be created in vain, unless it were filled with something; but I am insisting, first, upon this point, — the capacity, the foundation.

But now what, more precisely, is this foundation? It is intuition. It is an intuitive sense of moral obligation. It is an intuition of right, of justice, of goodness, and the beauty of goodness. It is also an intuitive *idea* of God, and comes so near to an absolute proof of his existence, that all mankind have, in one form or another, received it. And, again, the doctrine of immortality comes, if not from a positive intuition,

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yet from a notable instinct of humanity; proved to be such, says Guizot, by its having existed among all people, from the rudest to the most civilized. Human degradation may sometimes appear to lend but poor countenance to that faith. "Such poor creatures as men are, — many of them at least, — *can* they be immortal?" Some one, reporting of Coleridge's conversation, says that "he talked one day of the sense of immortality in man, and of its universality, which, in his opinion, caused it to partake of the nature of instinct in animals. The only time I ever saw Lord Byron, he added, he pointed to a man in a state of brutal intoxication, and asked if I thought that a proof of an immortal nature. 'Your inquiry, my lord, is,' I answered." — "And so it was," adds the reporter; "for it was the natural instinct shrinking with abhorrence from that degradation, — that apparent death of the soul." These, then, are the foundations of religion; of natural religion, of all religion, laid and imbedded, I believe, in the human soul by the hand that made it.

I wish now to single out from this grand, original category of faith, one point as the subject of some further argument upon the foundations of religion. I mean the belief in God, and especially in him as a righteous Being, a good Being.

Why it is, that our nature, our whole mind, demands this Being as the object of its faith and adoration; why every thing within us "cries out for God, for the living God," — I will not undertake to say or explain. It may be because a boundless capacity and reach of thought naturally demand a boundless object, that a love such as we are capable of, naturally soars to an infinitude of love, and cannot stop short of it. It is not — of this I am sure — a mere desire of infinite

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favor and protection. There is a deeper element, a diviner passion, in our being, that seeks its great Original. And certain it is, that, if that central Light be extinguished, all in us is dark and desolate. Strike out moral *intuition* from our religion, and the corner-stone is gone. Strike away the doctrine of *immortality*, and its loftiest pinnacle falls. But strike at *the filial faith in God*, — break that down, and every thing tumbles into ruins.

It cannot be without the profoundest concern, therefore, that every thoughtful man must look into those questions concerning the Supreme Nature, which our minds naturally raise, and especially under the guidance of modern science. It is not the "germ" doctrine of Professor Darwin that troubles me. But when we think of the extent of the universe; when we carry our views beyond our own sidereal system, so inconceivably vast, and embrace thousands of other systems, of perhaps equal extent; and when we reflect that all this may be but one section of the unbounded creation, — what are we to think of the Being, who made, who sustains, and who governs, the infinite whole? Our minds sink overwhelmed in that boundless abysm of existence; and we feel as if we knew, and could know, nothing concerning it, — nothing but that *it is*. "I am," seems to be all that it can tell us. Jonathan Edwards argues, that if any, the least event, thought, or motion in the universe were unknown to God, or uncontrolled by him, all would go to ruin. But what is that omnipotence, what that omniscience, which comprehends every event, every mind, every prayer, every thought, every act, every animalcule, and every animalcular motion, that takes place, at every moment, in the universe? Can any intelligence conceivable by us, can any moral attribute conceivable by us, belong

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to such a Nature? Is not such a Being, as has been contended, strictly and utterly "unknowable," "unthinkable," by us? If utterly unknowable, if in every respect so, then we are orphans; we are, to all spiritual intents and purposes, atheists, "without God and without hope."

But I do not yield to such a conclusion. The argument for it is grounded on the essential imperfection of all our ideas of intelligence and goodness. *These* we must not ascribe to God; therefore, it is said, we can ascribe nothing to him but bare existence; nothing, *i.e.*, of an intellectual or moral nature. But I make here a broad, and what seems to me, a very material distinction. Our mental processes, embracing succession, reasoning, comparison, steps of thought, and necessarily implying limitation, are one thing; quite another is our intuition of truth and right, which does not involve any reasoning nor imply any limitation. Intuition, grand in every way, is grandest of all in *this*. It is the archetype of the Divinity stamped on the soul. It is the symbol of eternal truth and right. It is the image of God.

If it were not so; did the Infinite Intuition of the true and right, differ essentially from ours; did the Infinite Intelligence differ entirely from what we understand by intelligence; did the Infinite Goodness, or what we call such, differ altogether from all we understand by goodness; might what we worship as Infinite Goodness, be Infinite Malignity for aught we know; then there would be nothing left for us to revere or love; and all inward, true religion would be struck to death by such fatal scepticism.

The question, broadly and abstractly stated, is this: Does a thing's being incomprehensible make it altogether unintelligible? On the contrary, I say that the

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very correlative of incomprehensibility is a certain degree of intelligibleness. We do not say, *that* of which we know *nothing* is incomprehensible, but *that* of which we know *something*. And it would seem to be an obvious distinction, that the nature of an object is one thing, and the extent of it another: but this distinction some late reasoners, if I understand them, do not seem to recognize. We do not know how far a thing extends; and, if it extends beyond the grasp of our conception, we do not know what it is, in that condition of inconceivable extension.

Is this true? Matter spreads to an inconceivable extent. Does it follow that it loses its nature in that extension? Are we not sure, on the contrary, that it continues the same? Mind rises, even in some human beings, — certainly it may in superior beings, — to a point that we cannot comprehend. Do we not, therefore, know what its nature is? Does intelligence, or does goodness, by extension, by infinite extension, cease to be intelligence or goodness? Numbers are capable of indefinite, of infinite multiplication. The infinite multiplication we cannot comprehend. Does it follow that we know nothing of the nature of numbers? Nay, do we not know, that the nature of numbers, though infinitely multiplied, must continue the same? As to comprehending, we do not comprehend any thing perfectly; and, if comprehending is the condition of knowing, we do not know any thing. It has been said that we cannot distinctly comprehend the number 20. Certain it is, that, as we go on counting from one, our ideas grow indistinct at every step; and we can no more comprehend a million of units than we can comprehend an infinity of them. Nay, not so much perhaps; for we have a distinct idea of infinitude, but we have not, of a million of units. But is it not a strange thing for a

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philosopher to say, you cannot comprehend a million of numbers, therefore you do not know what the nature of numbers is; or, when carried to an infinite multiplication, you do not know what their nature is, in that infinite multiplication?

It strikes at the validity of all knowledge to say, that we can have no just idea of that, in its nature, which we do not comprehend in its entirety. The astronomer understands something of the systems of the stars, though he does not understand their whole extent. I stand before the spectacle of nature: a soul in me meets and perceives an Intelligence and a Goodness manifest in the objects around me, manifested as plainly as if they were endowed with speech, and uttered the thoughts that are breathing and shining through them. And am I to be told, that, because they are the expression of an Infinite Mind, I know nothing of what they mean, or of what that mind reveals of itself through them? Does the phrase, "God in nature," blot out all life and light from nature? As well might I be told that I understand nothing of what a human being says to me, of what his meaning is when he speaks to me; for his meaning derives its character from an Infinite Mind, as truly as the meaning of nature does. And surely, if I could go on studying mind and matter for ages, or forever, I cannot help believing that they would express the same things. And yet if I could go on till I comprehended all created matter and all created mind, came nearest to the Infinite, comprehended the universe, in fact; yet, according to these reasonings, I should still know nothing of God, but as some unknown force. Who can yield to such reasonings? Alas! for the scientific tendency that is taking that direction; that, merged in material objects, sees not the light shining through them! No:

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mind going out to an Infinite Mind, brings back to us some intelligible conceptions, however inadequate. From that boundless deep of Being — the illimitable extension of our own being — come some solemn intimations of its nature. But now we are told, that from that infinite rebound comes — nothing! Pardon me, my brethren, if I dwell upon this subject with something of indignant earnestness. It is as vital to me as my existence. Without God, my being is a miserable wreck, amidst the wrecks of things around me.

But I maintain, in opposition to this philosophizing, that we cannot help thinking of intelligence and goodness, as attributes of the Supreme Nature. We cannot help thinking of an Infinite Intelligence and Goodness, any more than we can help thinking of an Infinite Cause.. The Infinite, as truly as the Finite, lies in the very categories of thought; and, if we do not think of an infinite nothing, we must think of an infinite something. Mr. Herbert Spencer does think of an infinite something, and he calls it Force or Cause; he falls back upon that; he considers that, I suppose, as "thinkable." But an infinite Cause he can no more comprehend, than an infinite Goodness. And if he claims, in strict philosophy, the right to think of an infinite Cause, why should he deny the right to think of an infinite Goodness? In fact, to be all the while writing, thinking of infinitude, and yet to deny that it is thinkable, seems a strange thing. Or, if we contemplate the Supreme Nature under the aspect of a personal Will, is a will any less a will, because it is almighty? It is a completely unauthorized, and in fact an unintelligible, conclusion. As James Martineau aptly says (in a private letter), "It is as conceivable to me that a Will should make a solar system, as that it should make a dew-drop; or a forest, as that it should make a tree."

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I feel, brethren, the awfulness of this theme. I think I understand how it is, that the contemplation of such a stupendous Existence, should tend to whelm all distinctions. But I believe it is simply the tendency of our weakness. Still, I believe, — after the perpetual formula of all creeds, — I believe in God; I believe in a Father in heaven. And I cling to this faith, not alone because of my weakness, but because I find that it is founded in a just philosophy. I do not accept it, as Mr. Spencer does Anthropomorphism, as a simply needful, provisional faith, which is yet to pass away. I believe it is never to pass away.

I have thus spoken of the foundations of religion as laid in certain original ideas of Right, of God, and of Immortality.

But a foundation is of no value, unless something is built upon it. "Thou believest in God: the devils also believe, and tremble." Thou believest in the right, and in the immortality of right; but transient and unsubstantial as dreams or reveries, may be thy virtue. It *is* but a revery, perhaps: how shall it be formed into a character? It is, possibly, but a professional assumption, or something taken at second-hand: how shall it be thoroughly thought out and felt, rooted in the soul, and so become a deep and all-absorbing reality?

How, — this is the question now before us, — by what means, in what way, through what agencies and influences, and, most of all, by what working out of the great problem in ourselves? For it is a personal, and sometimes it appears as if it were a fearful, problem? Why is it so fearful? Why is it so difficult to solve it? Why must we be so anxious and troubled for ourselves, and for all men, *upon this one point?* It seems so easy in theory, it is so difficult in practice; so easy

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and beautiful simply to feel the Great Presence all around as the very light; and to breathe all pure and gentle affections as the very atmosphere; and to make the very ground we tread upon, as the measured lists of those who run a race, with progress at every step and certain victory at the goal. Why is it so far otherwise with the common experience of men? Does it not seem, at times, as if there were some obstinate and intractable lump of depravity in our nature, some radical or inherited defect in our humanity, to account for its disheartening failures? Such, I am well assured, is *not* the true philosophy of our condition. Flesh and sense, with their dangerous tendencies, are appointed as the scaffolding of the building within; interests, our own or others', urging on the work, yet, through our blindness, interfere with it; ignorance of what the right is, often perplexes us; and the work is to go on amidst doubt and struggle and difficulty. It is difficulty, and not facility, in all human endeavors, in knowledge as well as in virtue, that produces the noblest results.

But, amidst it all, can we do any thing for ourselves or others? I answer, that we can do every thing, God helping us "to will and to do." To *will:* I place that in the foreground of the whole work. The true Christian is a self-made man. The concentrated will to do right, and to be right, is the first step in conversion; carried out, it *is* conversion. This every man can put forth, if in no other way, in these three: by abstaining from the wrong actions to which the passions impel him; by turning away the mind's *attention* from the wrong to the right; and by the diligent use of all proper means. He cannot, perhaps, will virtue, will right affections, into existence. In this sense, I should admit the old doctrine of human inability. God creates those affections, not man. He has created the

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germs of those affections within us: it is ours to cultivate them. Just as, in geometry, we do not create the axioms: they are created within us; but we build upon them.

But this opens to us the broad field of our inquiry, What is to be done to bring men to this will and endeavor? In other words, what are the influences and agencies that are to come into our contemplation, as means of building up religion in the world?

Let us take account, then, first of the breadth of these influences; and next of their place and power in the Christian religion, church, and ministry.

In their breadth, they embrace all that forms the character. Christianity takes a leading part; but there are many things beside, to be considered. External means have their place; but there are far deeper and stronger powers within. Conscience, the sense of right, stands first; that which is truly the Spirit of God within us. Fear, doubtless, drives many to religion; a very questionable influence, and producing a very questionable result. Far more profound, is the sense of an infinite need, which nothing but religion can supply. And I believe, if we examine our own minds, we shall find that what has earliest drawn us to the highest things, is the example of excellent persons, — of our parents and friends; example, whether in real life or in biography. This opens to us the whole sphere of society, and indeed of good literature (which is the life of souls), as the field of religious growth.

The field is wide, as wide as the world; nay, it *is* the world. Religion, it has been justly said, is an "earth-made thing;" and that was said by our Orthodox missionary brother, Mr. Nott, of Wareham, in his preface to an excellent little volume of sermons, entitled the "Birds and Lilies." It is an earth-made

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thing, as truly as it is a heavenly breath. And all things should conspire to its upbuilding. It is not the Bible alone, nor the Church alone, nor preaching alone; but it is Nature, it is life, it is society, it is business, it is daily toil, that should be engaged in this great ministration.

And all this, I conceive, should be shown and taught to the people. In particular, I cannot help thinking, that we should preach more than we do, from the teachings of nature. That was the manner of the Great Teacher. What is the view that most men have of the world they live in, — of the material world? The old desecration of it, is only somewhat modified. It is, indeed, no longer regarded as directly the work of Demiurge, or Devil; but, to men generally, what is the material world? It is a mere clod to work upon, a hard taskmaster, or a place to build cities in, or to open roads and to do business, or to make a prosperous career; and its divine laws and ministrations do not come into their thoughts, once in a hundred times that they think of it. And they never will learn any spiritual lessons from it till they are taught something of what it means; something of the philosophy of their condition; something to make them understand that their daily labor is good for them, — is essential, in fact, both to their virtue and happiness. To make this disparaged world, then, a religious sphere; to show how full of wonderful wisdom are its laws and ordinances; to make daily life a scene of honest, faithful, and pious task-work, — this is to build up religion: and prayer and preaching are of little avail, if this is not accomplished.

And the social sphere, — that, first, which is technically called society; so dull and vapid often for want of thought and the free play of thought; so chilled

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and crippled by envy and ambition; so awkward under the bondage of self-consciousness and the miserable fear of one another, — what freedom, what fresh life and joy, would be poured into it by the highest religion, by the sense and love of a heavenly Presence all around, which would make "the whole world kin"! Then next, the social problems, — all that concerns men's social rights and duties, — freedom, suffrage, obedience to law, all that helps humanity, must come into the large and just view of building up religion. "For if a man love not his brother whom he hath seen, how can he love God whom he hath not seen?"

The love of God is, doubtless, the highest sentiment: it is the first and great commandment. But I have sometimes thought that there may be a superstitious exaggeration of it, as compared with the love of man; and that not alone with mystics and pietists. "If thou bring thy gift to the altar, and there rememberest that thy brother has aught against thee, leave there thy gift before the altar, and go thy way; first be reconciled to thy brother, and then come and offer thy gift." Wonderful words! and especially for the age in which they were delivered. Not that I would derogate any thing from the supreme claim. No: I join with the mystics and the pietists, with Thomas à Kempis and Tauler, in that. One Power, that binds the universe to perfect order; one Justice, that sustains the right, and will tread down all wrong; one Wisdom, that guides the stars in their courses, and the footsteps of men; one Love, that embraces all creatures, through infinitude and eternity, in its fulness, — this is the soul's sufficiency and beatitude and rest. But we may love and venerate in *men* the same excellence in its nature, that we love and venerate in God. "The second," said the Master, after having laid down the

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first commandment, — "the second is *like* unto it: thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself."

But it is time that I come to what especially belongs to this second branch of my discourse, — to Christianity, to the Church and its ministrations.

The Church has its theology. Of what weight and importance is this, in promoting virtue and piety among the people, or in moulding their character? Something, doubtless, is in this respect to be attributed to it, but not every thing, nor even the principal influence. Still, what a man believes, must have some influence upon what he feels. In fact, what he *really* believes, constitutes a part of what he *is*. But so has religion been severed from all rational connection with every thing else, that it has been possible for the most beautiful forms of character to grow up amidst every variety of belief, and of the most monstrous belief. The result is not logical; but men are not logical. The result, too, is somewhat exceptional; and, with the body of mankind, what they think must have a great deal to do with what they are. Mr. Lecky has drawn a terrible picture of what the doctrines of exclusive salvation and eternal perdition, for the mass of men, did, to produce a general inhumanity and the most relentless persecutions; and it is not more terrible than true.

Within the last twenty or thirty years, there has been a remarkable decadence of controversial theology, and especially perhaps, among ourselves. The older men among us, who took part in the controversy with the Orthodox faith, became thoroughly tired of it; and mostly in their preaching turned away from it. This tendency, I believe, has gone full far, and ought to be checked. The day of creeds, it is said, has gone by; but I do not think so. The day of dogmatic creeds,

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if you please, but not of vital beliefs. And I conceive that it is our duty again to spread before the people, in books and tracts, the views we hold of religious truth and of religion. I believe they are of the utmost importance in building up a rational, cheerful, and earnest faith and piety.

But there is a controversy which has arisen among ourselves, and is of more interest to us than any we have with others; and *that* relates to the character of the claim which Christianity itself has upon our reverence. Has it a supernatural claim? Does it bear upon it the stamp of miracle, either in the character or in the works of its Founder?

This question turns upon the view we take of the Christian records. Are they reliable? Are they to be taken mainly as they stand? Or do they consist, in considerable part, of legendary accretions that grew up about the original story? Are they in part, of the same unreliable character as the spurious Gospels? We have a body of such Gospels. They contain internal evidence enough of being spurious. No one can read them without feeling it. With the exception of the Gospel of Nicodemus, or Acts of Pilate, which is evidently a constructed fiction, all these writings are full of improbable, or absurd and idle stories. But the genuine Gospels bear all the marks of sobriety and honesty together; and are, indeed, every way of such a moral tone, that it is impossible to believe that the writers intentionally inserted what they knew to be mere fables, to embellish their narratives. And, if they had given simply and only an account of Jesus as a pure and sublime Teacher, we should have credited them without hesitation.

It must be, then, a distrust of all miracles, that leads us to distrust the Evangelists. It is the assump-

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tion that a miracle is in itself and altogether, an impossible and an incredible thing. Are we entitled to take this ground? Is the system of the universe such a system of "evolutions," rolling up every thing into their folds, that it is not left to God himself, to change or re-enforce any power in matter or mind? If we say this, upon what grounds can we say it? Certainly not that we intuitively know it. And if upon any other ground, it must be that we know all the facts and possibilities in the universe; which we do not know.

The truth is, I suppose, that the rejection of miracles does not depend on argument, but upon a general state of mind. It is that state of mind which Mr. Lecky has described in his admirable book on the history of Rationalism in Europe. We all know — know by experience — what it is; and we all welcome in general the progress of Rationalism. But all progress goes by swayings back and forth; and the question is, whether the rationalistic tendency may not, on this subject, go too far; just as every other tendency — liberty, equality, democracy — may at times go too far. It certainly may be so; and it would not surprise me to see a reaction in favor of miracles.

But, however this shall be, I desire for myself to touch ground amidst the swayings of the great rationalistic tide, and not to be carried too far. If there is one state of mind that is unfavorable to miracles, there is another that is favorable to them; and it may be the most philosophical of the two. Is the Supreme Nature an infinitely loving Nature, or is it a mere impersonal Force? When I am most impressed with God's tender mercy to every creature, and dismiss the childish thought that it cares less for this world because it is one of an infinite number; when I see what a world it is, and feel the mighty burden upon its heart, of

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sorrows and strugglings and perils; and when I behold that immaculate Wonder which rose in the world, eighteen centuries ago, to shine with healing power upon all the ages, — it does not seem to me irrational to believe, that this grandest intervention for human help, was marked by the finger of God, with some special emphasis and attestation. I cannot say that I know it, — this is not a matter for dogmatic and unquestionable statement; but that my mind inclines me to believe it.

The question here, belongs to the philosophy of Christianity, and not to its essence; and ought not to alienate or separate its true friends. I see as good men on one side of it as the other. And for good and thoughtful men to hold one another under any religious or social proscription for their honest opinions, ought to belong to the accursed intolerance of the past.

The truth is, the vitality of the Christian religion, lies deeper than miracles. The mission of Christ is the same in its object, whether attested by miracles or not, — to lead us out of darkness into light; out of distrust and despair to filial faith; out of sin and sorrow to holiness and blessedness. Men *may* be so led, *are* so led, without ever thinking of miracles or the miraculous. There are miracles in the human soul, — at least there are direct and divine imprints upon it, — that are of deeper import than any that are external or exceptional. Christianity itself, is based upon something deeper than its visible form or claim. I accept it as the best of religions, but not as the whole of religion. "The Christian consciousness," though that phrase is constantly pronounced as the final word, is not the final word. The final and great word — Jesus himself being witness — is God; and the spirit of God breathing in the human soul. Nothing offends me

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more than the extravagant claims of the Christian dogmatists, saying, "Nothing but Christ, nothing but Christ,"—as if God were not; and the presence of God were nothing. No: it is not true that all religion lies within the compass even of *Christian* dogma and institution. It comes also from the wayside of still meditation. It comes from the midnight stars. It comes from the clouds of eventide. It came so to Antoninus and Boethius, and many another, who, without written law, were a law to themselves. It comes from converse with good men's presence and example and heroic deeds. It comes from the biographic page, from poetic inspiration, from pictures of saints and martyrs, from the deeps of music; from wherever the spirit of God, like the unseen wind, breathes holy refreshment and healing life through the hearts of the children of men.

But I am dwelling too long upon this topic; and I have something yet to say of the Church and its ministrations, as the means of awakening and kindling a religious life in the people. I must limit myself to a few words upon the Church as a working institution (so to speak); upon preaching and the manner of the Great Preacher; and upon the Ordinance that commemorates him.

With regard to the Church as a working institution, I have often thought, that if I were the pastor of a church, in town or country, but especially in the latter, I should want a building of hardly less capacity than the church itself, for various purposes. I should want a library-room, and a reading-room, and a lecture-room; which should also be a chapel for conference and other religious services; and also one or two rooms for charitable work. I would make this a rallying-place for the congregation, where they might find

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"books and work and healthful play"—of the intellect. Here I should like to talk to them, from time to time, of the works of Nature, of the world they live in, and try to make them understand something of it. I should like, too, to have lectures from the more intelligent members of the congregation, and discussions, conference, questions and answers upon these subjects; and also at times, deeper religious conference. And it seems as if something might be done here, to make the people acquainted with the intellectual world they live in. That grand outcome of the world's thought which we call Literature,—what a sad default to reason, to common sense, for persons who can read, to pass through this life-sphere, and to know nothing of its sublimest oracles! Men read, read much perhaps; but what? Ephemeral trash, the last sensation novel, or the newspaper; and they know little or nothing of Plato or Epictetus, of Hooker or Addison, or Milton or Burke, hardly of Shakspeare, but that such persons have lived. And I firmly believe, that, if any pastor would take up this plan; if he did not preach so much; if, instead of wearing himself out with making formal visits, and writing so many sermons,—Dr. Chauncey said, two hundred were as many as any man should write; if, I say, he would meet the people in *this* way, they would know him better, and he them; and altogether they might build themselves up in a culture, both of knowledge and religion, that, for a religious congregation, would be a new thing in the world.

Such gatherings of the people might be on one or two evenings of the week, or on Sunday afternoons. It would be better, I think, than to listen to a second sermon, which drives out the first,—a custom, too, which muddles the people's ideas about sermons altogether, so that they can tell less about them than of any thing

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else they hear or know. There is too much preaching. There is too much preaching for the preacher. There is too much preaching for the people.

But preaching, — this is the second point I am to notice. There is a sigh through all the land, over dull preaching. And when a man comes along, who touches and melts the heart of the people, it is an era to them: they remember it long after. I am speaking in the general. I know that we have interesting preachers among us, and a good many of them, — more, I believe, than any other people have. Still, there is a sad deficiency; and the question is, — and it is the greatest practical question I know, — How are we to pour a new and quickening life into the pulpit?

But, first, what would that quickening life be? I answer, simple earnestness, a profound impression and religious tenderness in the preacher, that would touch all hearts around him. I know what is said of gifts, of genius, of enthusiasm, as not belonging to everybody; and I admit all their value and charm. But I maintain, that there may be a deep feeling of religion without them. And he who should speak to me with that feeling, — he even who should so read a hymn, or a Psalm of David, as to touch my heart, — would do more for me, of that for which I come to church, than the most splendid discourse without it. The splendid discourse I can read at home; but what I go to church for is impression, — to feel the power of religion. I recall now an aged man of the humblest ability and culture, who, when he stood up and prayed in the meeting, — his slender frame and white locks trembling with emotion, like a holocaust of love and thanksgiving — made upon me more of that impression, than any other religious ministration that I remember in my youth. Mrs. Kemble, in her "Georgian Journal,"

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tells of her reading the words of Jesus to the slaves. She said afterwards, speaking of it, "As I read those words, I wondered how anybody ever dared to make a commentary upon them." I do not doubt, that, for showing what those words meant, her reading was better than any commentary. I remember a simple woman teaching in a Sunday school, who so pronounced the word GOD, — I do not recall any thing else she said, — but who with such a tender awe pronounced that word, that it was a sermon to me, such as few could equal. That was forty years ago; but it has been a blessed impression upon my mind ever since.

But how is this sense of things divine, this religious fervor, to be obtained; which makes the weak strong, and the simple-hearted more than eloquent? For answer, I think we must go to our religious nurture, and to the very roots of it. It has been superstitious; it has been based on false ideas; it has lacked a genial and inspiring warmth. All this must be changed. Religious nurture must be as simple and natural as that which awakens the love of knowledge, of art, of beauty, of all things lovely and beautiful. Then, if the education of our youth in school and college could be what it should be! Alas, it is not! But this being so, I will venture to say, that the object of our theological schools, should be, more than it has been, the nurture of a religious spirit. The learning obtained in them is well. But if our Theological Instructors — I speak it with all respect for them — could gather their pupils together weekly in earnest religious conference, and pour an enkindling warmth into those meetings, so that all hearts should be touched by it, so that the latent and slumbering sensibility should be *nursed* into a holy fervor and joy, I believe it would be worth more than all the learning.

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There has been one teacher — the great Teacher — at whose feet we sit; and his words, at which our hearts leap for joy or tremble with awe, were not delivered in the style of what is ordinarily called eloquence. How sober and quiet they were! but what great words, and of what immense, of what unequalled, power! Gather the wisest men of all ages, and not one of them, nor all of them together, could do for us what he has done. A power lies in the simple record of what he said and did and suffered, which no criticism can shake, — which even Renan's does not *propose* to disturb. It has not only pervaded, it has presided over, the civilization of nearly eighteen centuries; and if any thing on earth is of heaven, of the very providence of God, it is this.

A word now, in close, upon the Ordinances of the Church, which, to complete the view of Church influences, I ought to speak of.

Baptism has its fitness, — the birth-time rite, the celebration of a most momentous event, the thankful recognition of God's goodness, and the humble recognition, with prayer and consecration, of the most solemn trust that can be committed to mortals, — this is naturally fit and beautiful; though there be no express Christian warrant for it, except when applied to converts from heathenism. And why shall not the great Eucharistic Rite be regarded as naturally fit and beautiful, — the affectionate commemoration of the ever-revered and beloved Master, — such visible homage to that wonderful being who stands alone in the world, in the thoughts of all who have ever read or known of him? It is natural to do this. Great men have often been so commemorated after death, — are now; for a few years the memory of them has been so kept alive. But *this* memorial has stood through all

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the Christian centuries. It seems to me a serious thing to lower it from its place, and lay it aside. Much difficulty as I feel about the too commonly mournful, constrained, and superstitious observance of it, I cannot do that. It may be said, that the Quakers have laid it aside, without any ill consequence. I doubt that. Quakerism is going out into intellectual dispersion, for want of fixtures. A solemn memorial altar, standing in the world, may serve to bind men to the great Christian allegiance. I am as sensible as any one can be, of the mistaken ideas and manners with which the Lord's Supper has been surrounded: they have troubled me all my life. The notions of the communion, as a test or a profession of goodness, rather than a help to it; as a mark on the sheep of the fold; or as something to be partaken of with preternatural awe, are as injurious as they are wrong. Cannot something be done to correct them? Cannot we as pastors, by a manner in this service free from all superstition, by a manner simple, natural, cheerful, affectionate, and earnest, do something to invest it with a new character? If I should hear of a company of disciples that came together in a cheerful heartiness and voluntariness, to spend an hour or an evening in the remembrance of Jesus; to sing hymns to him, perhaps, as of old; to sing anthems, to speak of him, to admire and to glorify the *divinest man*, — I should want to be there. But it is not so with our ordinary celebrations: the spirit, I mean, is not such. We are too literal. We fix our thoughts upon the symbols, when it were better that the symbols were lost sight of, in the feeling of what they mean. The letter killeth; the form killeth: but the spirit maketh alive.

But the spirit maketh alive, — this would b
final word, if I had any to offer. The letter ki

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in dogma, in form, in institution, the letter killeth. But the spirit, — the breath divine in our souls, the deep and living sense of religion in our hearts, underlying and quickening every thing else, — this alone can make us *men;* this alone can make us preachers to men.

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THEISM AND ATHEISM: A TALK WITH MY NEIGHBOR.

From the Old and New, for March, 1873.

(WHAT *he* said will be indicated by quotation marks.)

Can a man, I said, be an atheist? On the contrary, do not the laws of his mind oblige him to believe that this universe has a cause?

"I doubt it," was his answer. "Comte was an atheist. Vogt is an atheist. I do not know but I am one myself."

I am amazed to hear you say so.

"It is natural," he replied, "that you should use that word to express your feeling; and I do not say positively that I am an atheist. I am willing to reason the matter with you; but I confess that, of the two doctrines, theism seems to me the more amazing."

How is that? What do you mean?

"This is what I mean; and I ask you to consider it. If the cause of all things is intelligent, this intelligence must embrace the *knowledge* of all things, must it not?"

I have something, I suggested, which I wish to say on the doctrine of omniscience; but what is it that you say?

"Think then, I say, of this world, with its 1,300,000,000 of human inhabitants, with their actions, words, and thoughts; next of the animate creation, with its

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200,000 or 300,000 species, hundreds of thousands of each kind, and unnumbered millions of some; think of the animalcules that fill the seas, 500,000,000 of them in a drop of water; think of the action and inter-action upon one another of all these living organisms that fill earth, air, and waters; and of the particles of matter and forces of heat, light, electricity, that contribute to make up the inconceivable whole. But this world is only a pinfold in the universe. Unnumbered larger orbs are rolling through the heavens, and all filled, doubtless, with life, as the world is, — filled, certainly, with material atoms acting one upon another. Can we conceive of the possibility of an intelligence that is acquainted with all this, from worlds to atoms, so that there is not one of them, nor one of their motions, of which it can be said that God doth not know it?"

My answer to this, I said, is twofold. In the first place, our limitation is no measure of the illimitable. It would be infinite presumption to make our conception of possibility the judge of what is possible. There is no contradiction, no absurdity, in the idea of such an infinite intelligence. Till we know what omniscience is, it is not for us to say what is, or is not, possible to it. But, in the second place, my idea of omniscience is different from what you have represented omniscience to be. It used to be argued by theologians, I remember, that such omniscience was necessary to an infinite and unerring government; that if the smallest particle in the creation should act upon another, without the instant cognition of the infinite Ruler, such action might introduce a principle of boundless disorder into the system. If they had said, without the control of the infinite Ruler, that I could admit; but that control, I conceive, may be exercised

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by the imposition of law. Suppose all natures, material, animal, and mental, to be subject to laws, — material to the law of forces, animal to the law of instinct, and mental to the laws of reason and conscience; then might they be left to run their own course, and so might they fulfil the design of their existence, without inspection or intervention.

"Subject to law, you say; that may apply to matter and instinct; but is man subject to the laws of reason and conscience?"

Yes, I replied, in the main and the long-run, he is. A certain liberty, doubtless, is given him. He could not be a moral nor an improvable being, if he were held fast in the bonds of law, like a stone, or like the worm that crawls upon it. A liberty is allowed him to sway this way and that, into temporary disobedience. Still the laws of reason and conscience hold their place in him; they are not deposed by rebellion; and the divine and lawful sovereignty may be left to vindicate and establish itself, as it will in due time.

"It does not yet," he said. "I do not see it. All things go on without hindrance and without help, as if there were nothing in existence but the things themselves; wrongs, outrages, murders, are perpetrated; slavery, tyranny, cruel war, grind men to the dust. Why, if there is an almighty justice reigning over the world, does it not stretch forth a hand, to rescue and save? Why was not that blasphemous railer, as you must regard him, — he who rose in the godless French convention, and said, 'I deny that there is a God; if there is a God, let him prove it,' — why, I say, was he not striken down on the spot where he stood?"

Yes, I said, the poor puny blasphemer could vent his breath; the brutal tyrant can crush down innocence and defy justice. There is a more solemn and merci-

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ful control over the world than the avenging blow. There is a judgment more deeply founded than what is commonly called "a judgment" upon a man.

"Well, you say so," he replied; "and of course you think so; indeed, all the world thinks so. But, opinion and prejudice apart, what ground is there for thinking that any thing exists but the universe itself, — any creative and controlling Spirit? You do not see it; you do not feel it; and, strictly speaking, you have no intuition of it; for intuition cannot go beyond *self*-consciousness. And when you come to argument, many philosophers discard the argument from design. And the scientific men, now, are tracing back life, through endless evolutions, to some original germ, not bigger, perhaps, and no more vital apparently, it may be, than a grain of sand. They seem to have run every thing out into nothing. I do not see any thing behind; and I doubt if they do."

But I do. If that original germ held infolded in it, what has flowed out into all the wonders of creation, there must have been something different from the material elements that compose a grain of sand, — something behind or within it, that we call mind, thought, design, — a foreseeing, certainly, of what was to be developed.

"Mind, thought, design!" he exclaimed; "may we apply such words, drawn from our own experience, to the Infinite?"

Doubtless we must do so, I replied, with qualification; but not with a qualification that excludes the radical meaning from them. Design is, perhaps, especially a questionable word; and I could wish that the argument from design had been called the argument from an intent or purpose manifest in nature. Because design carries with it an idea of contrivance, of con-

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struction, of mechanical adjustment, which we have no right to attribute to the infinite intelligence. The purest intellection is all that we may dare to ascribe to it, *not the method of its action.* But that there must be something, — some principle, some power, besides dead, inert, unthinking matter, I hold to be manifest and clear, — the dictate and demand not more of a devout piety than of the soundest reason.

"After all," he said, "I think it will be found to be analogy. You look upon some well-adjusted piece of mechanism, a watch or a cotton-gin, and you know that a mind devised it; and when you see similar adjustments in nature, reasoning from analogy, you ascribe it to a devising mind. But analogy is not proof."

But I say that analogy, be it valid or not, is precisely what I propose to avoid. Imagine that you had never seen any machine that was made by human hands. Come, then, to the simple fact in nature; and there are facts enough which have no analogy to human work, and which furnish the proof we seek for, quite independently of any such comparison. You see, and cannot deny, that in nature there is a certain relation of one thing to another. What is it? It is a relation of means to ends. It is not merely that one thing succeeds another, as antecedent and consequent, or as what is called cause and effect; but one thing succeeds another in an order which indicates purpose and prevision, — which indicates not a method of action, but a principle of action; not the *how* in nature, but the *what* must underlie the system. Nothing can come out of a system which was not in it. In matter there is no intelligence; but here is intelligence in unbounded manifestation all around us. Or will one say that intelligence is an *attribute* of *matter* itself, as gravita-

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tion or growth or crystallization is? Then, it is all a dispute about words. Then we should say, for this would be the truth, however monstrously it may sound, that thinking matter, or materialized thought, is God.

I say that, in the relations of things, there must somewhere be found a place for thought. Law, which science so idolizes, must be itself mental or produced by mind. Mind is somewhere in nature, because there are relations in it. It is a vast system of relations, such that the whole charm of science lies in this interdependence of one thing upon another. It is not bare, isolated fact that occupies the philosophic student of nature, but the bearing of one fact, or class of facts, upon another. *Evolution* is the quest of science now; that is, the flowing out of one thing into another, and higher. *Theory* has always been the passion of the naturalist. And the naturalist who holds the sublime theory, that all things have proceeded from an Infinite Wisdom, finds a world, a universe of things, in accordance with it. Is it not, then, the natural, fair, and reasonable impression upon our minds — call you it *proof* or not — that such a universe of relations has proceeded from an Infinite Intelligence?

I am taking my stand, in this argument, upon nature; and, in debating the matter with you, I mean to do so. I know that some thinkers give up the argument from material nature, and rely upon the nature of the soul alone. But this passes with you, I know, for nothing better than vague presumption. It amounts only to this, that a man has such impressions and convictions. I perceive, too, that, on your scientific theory, you might say, that as the soil resolves itself into vegetable life, and the animal organization develops instinct, so the human develops thought and conscience, — all springing alike from the bosom of nature; thought

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being just as natural a product of the brain as sensation is of the nervous system, or vegetation of the soil.

I would embrace in my own, therefore, the whole system of relations leading up to and including man. Whether — as reasoning with you, at least — whether the nature of the soul reveals an Infinite Soul, I will not decide. Be it admitted that intuition does not prove it. Be it admitted that, as vegetable life does not of itself prove an infinite life, as animal instinct does not prove an infinite instinct, so neither does the human conscience prove an Infinite Conscience. Let us stand, then, upon the solid foundation of the world.

"Very well," he said; "this is getting down to the grounds of things. And now, I ask, why, when we see the principle of order and adaptation in nature, — adaptation of the form of the world to motion, of its structure to the habitation and sustenance of living creatures; of its mountains to the rivers and plains; of food to the stomach, of breath to the lungs, of light to the eye, — why, I repeat, shall I not say, that this is nature itself, and nothing else, — that it is *the nature of things*, and that is all?"

Well, I do not object.

"You do not object? Then you, too, are an atheist."

Let us see. You say, or suggest, that the nature of things may have given birth to all the wonder, wisdom, and beauty of the creation.

"Yes."

Then I say that you endow what you call the nature of things with all the attributes of God. If the nature of things has done all that we see in the universe around us, then the nature of things is intelligent, then the nature of things is beneficent, nay, lovely and glorious. It is all as I said before, a mere dispute about words. What you call the nature of things, I call

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God. And it is no escape from the conclusion, to say that things are evolved from one another by insensible gradations and not by leaps, from one species to another. Intelligence and beneficence are equally *in* all things, whether they come in the one form or the other.

I have been speaking in general terms of the relation of one thing to another. I should like now to adduce a single instance, to show how manifest is the presence of intelligence in the system.

I met lately with a statement of some one of the modern scientific theorists (who trace every thing to the effort of nature to perfect itself) *upon the origin and organ of seeing*. It was something to this effect, — that some nerve in the human organization may have caught the first sensation of light, and then that in the natural struggle for more light, in the natural effort to see, at length, by slow processes, the eye was formed. It would be very curious to consider how the parts around, set to work to produce this wonderful piece of mechanism. It must have been formed in some way; and Dr. Darwin, upon his theory, must say, — not by direct creation of the orb as it is, but by slow accretions, by tentative efforts of the nerve of seeing, and help of the parts around it, to improve the organ of sight. It would be curious, I say, to consider how these blind agents set to work; but the upshot of their wonderful endeavors is, that they make a little globe of gelatine — why *two* does not appear, since one would have answered the purpose — a little globe of the consistency of gelatine, with parts so arranged, one behind another, as to answer the purpose of lenses, — with one *definitely formed* lens, the crystalline, — and all so adjusted as to cause the rays to converge and fall exactly upon a focus at the bottom, —

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that is, upon the retina; at the same time coating the surface beneath it with black, so as to have no reflections of light there to disturb the impression. And so wisely did these unintelligent forces of nature work, that they placed the eyes in hollow recesses, surrounded with a bony ridge, to protect them from harm, and then formed the eyelashes, those ciliary guards, to keep out intrusive dust and insects, and then placed above, the *chevaux de frise* of the eyebrow, to prevent brine-drops of sweat from running down into the eye; and they hung the little orb in its socket, so that, like the telescope, it could be turned up and down, and to one side and the other, and gave the pupil the power of contraction and expansion for adjustment to the degree of light. And the iris, the rainbow of the eye, let us not forget that. The iris doubtless makes vision clearer, by cutting off scattering, outside rays; but it is also made for beauty, for expression. The sclerotica, the white of the eye, might have been drawn quite up to the pupil; but that would have been hideous. So the wondrous artists painted the iris, to shine with gemlike beauty, to kindle and glow and soften by turns, so as to vary with every mood of the mind. And, finally, they stretched a telegraphic line of nerve, to convey the sensation of light to the brain.

"Well," he said, with a candor that I did not expect, "I cannot deny that such a construction displays intelligence, as truly as the making of a telescope. I admit that this, and a universe of similar indications, proclaims a mind, if any thing can; and it is grateful to think so. Our physicists, by tracing all things through material evolutions, back to an unknown beginning almost infinitely distant, seem to remove the prevalent, ever-present Divine Cause, from men's thoughts. If not the legitimate result, it is the

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natural effect of their theories, to make a universe, void of God."

Yes, I replied, they pursue truth on certain lines of thought; they do not take into their contemplation those broader and grander relations which the study of a universe unfolds. They make a god of science, and only a myth of religion. Dr. Darwin is satisfied with saying, when obliged to admit that the ape and gorilla have no idea of God, "neither have the rudest tribes of men."[1] He might as well have said, neither have babies. The question about what is human as distinguished from animal, turns upon what a normal and developed humanity is. Man is a religious being; the animal is not. A man growing up alone, on a desert island, like Automathes of the old story, would not be social; but he would quickly show that his nature was so, when brought into the presence of his fellows. And so, when the idea of God arises in the mind of the most uncultured human being, he naturally accepts and welcomes it; while all the education in the world cannot give it to the ape or gorilla.

The *savans* charge the theologians with being bound up in their own prepossessions and prejudices, excluding science. It might be retorted on them, I think, that they are as much shut up to their own inquiries and theories, excluding theology. The disappearance of God from all the wonder and beauty of nature as they see it, so unlike the way of Newton and Kepler, is as if one, in making a study of the Apollo di Belvedere, should be occupied alone with its materials and dimensions, should examine the marble of which it is composed, analyze its elements, and trace it back to its original formation, should measure the height and

[1] Descent of Man, vol. i., chaps. ii. & iii.

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breadth of the statue, the length of the arms and hands, to the very finger-nails, and should be so absorbed in the task as to forget the divine beauty of the work, and the genius that fashioned it.

What an oversight! What a void in the universe, if God were not! Think of the ranks of worshippers stretching through ages; of the smoking altars, the choral songs of thanksgiving that have engirdled the earth; of the successive generations, bowing in cathedrals, in crowded churches, and in holy retirements, — all lifting their eyes to — nothing! all the sublimest, holiest, most heartfelt homages in the world cast away from the history of men, as nothing but mere blundering and mockery, as if heaven laughed earth to scorn! I should feel, if this were so, as if there were no reality nor verity in any thing. It would be a universe of mere sham and show, — a universe turned upside down, more frightful than chaos.

What would such a world be to us who live in it, who think and feel, and struggle and suffer? Banish all design, all intent, all creative thought and love from the universe, and what remains? Simply *a constitution of things*, unrevealing, unmeaning, unloving. Then what are we, and what shall we do? Oh! build an altar blacker than heathenism ever saw, than ever was built to Moloch or to Mars; surround it with woods darker than Dodona, or than Druid oaks; pour out upon it, for offering, the tears of the human race, and lift up a universal dirge, a wail of despair, over the extinction of all that is dearest and holiest to the human soul.

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ON THE VALIDITY OF OUR KNOWLEDGE OF GOD.

From the Old and New.

THERE is a feeling in many thoughtful minds, about the Divine Infinitude, which seems to cut them off from the knowledge of the Divine Nature. Some profound writers, of late, have been reasoning about the infinitude of God, till they have appeared to reason away nearly all knowledge of him. Their method, the path they have pursued, has been one of negations, and, it seems to me, a descending path, — a path not leading upward to God, but downward and away from him. The more they study, the less they seem to know. As if the sun, while they gazed upon it, should retire and retire, and dwindle and sink farther and farther into the depths of infinitude, till nothing remained but the faintest speck of light.

I would, in this essay, pursue the opposite course. I would trace the ascending path to the knowledge of God.

There is a natural and boundless desire of knowledge; and it demands a boundless object. It is the first human characteristic in the child, — the desire to know. It grows with our growth and strengthens with our strength. I would know all that I can know. I would know all I can of things around me. Nothing can be presented to me, no new thing, no secret, no mystery, but the immediate questions arise, — What is

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it? and what is it for? Yet more would I know all of my kind that is best worth knowing. I would know all that I can of the most gifted men that have acted their part in the world. I read history, biography, — I read books for this: I want to know what the noblest men have thought, and said, and written. And, in this ascending series, surely of all the beings that have been in this world, he whom I most desire to know and understand, and draw nigh to, is Jesus the Christ. If I could penetrate into the secret, into the sanctuary of his thoughts and life; if I could know his innermost meditation and trust, and patience and calmness, — I should account it better than to understand the experience of any other. Let all Christian professions be put aside; let any one read the Gospels, and take the natural impression; and then let him say whether there is any other being, that he ever read of, whose experience, whose thoughts and mind, he so desires to understand, as that of him, who, many centuries ago, walked by the hillsides of Judæa, dropping words, which, gathered up in the simple and inartificial reports of his disciples, have been read and remembered in all the civilized world, as no other have ever been read and remembered. Libraries have been written concerning him; and, notably to-day, books are multiplied, coming alike from men of every creed and no creed, which show that he is the theme of universal and unabated interest.

But can we stop here? When we have travelled upon the path of ascending excellence to the highest that we can find on earth, then does there not open to us a higher perfection for us to study and meditate upon?

That such a perfection exists, all things prove. If any one has atheistic doubts, I would ask him one

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question. Has something originated this universe, or nothing? Does some cause lie behind it, — say, rather, is interfused with it, — or no cause? Reason cannot hesitate which alternative to adopt. Much as is said of a scientific materialism prevailing, or atheism, as some indignantly call it; yet, after all, I know of no writer nor man who refuses to believe that the universe has a Cause.

But the nature, the character, of this Cause, — do we understand it? Or, as some would say, *can* we understand it? One said to me lately, "I heard of your preaching a sermon on the love of God; and that you said, or implied, that *you loved God*. How could you say that?" "Why not?" I said. "Because," was the reply, "that cause, power, or being, that we call God, is infinitely beyond your comprehension, — is, in its nature, utterly unknown to you." I saw at once from whence this reasoning came, and will give in a few words my reply to it. It came, let me first say, from a habit of mind which reasons thus: God is infinite. We speak of Infinite Power, Infinite Knowledge, Infinite Love. When we use these words, we necessarily affix to them ideas that are drawn from our own experience. Can we suppose that Infinitude in God is but the expansion of what is in us? More precisely, and to come to the very point, can we suppose that Intelligence in God is, in any respect, like intelligence in us? or that Love in God is, in any respect, like love in us? I answer, with the solemn reservation that we have been always taught to make for our human limitations, that I think we can. And this is the ground I take in answer to those who say that God's Infinitude debars us from knowing any thing of his nature. You confound things that are entirely different. You confound the nature of a thing with its mag-

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nitude. You confound comprehension with intellection. You say, that, because we cannot comprehend a subject, therefore we can know nothing about the kind of subject that it is. That would debar us from all knowledge. We do not comprehend the growth of any spire of grass, or the life of any insect about us,—why, or how, one or the other of them is what it is. Do we, therefore, know nothing concerning its quality or structure? The growth, the life, of each is a mystery: do we, therefore, make no distinction between the nature of a vegetable and the nature of an animal? Now, to apply this to that Infinitude before which we all bow down with solemn awe, we cannot comprehend infinitude; we cannot comprehend the Infinitude of God. But it by no means follows, that we cannot understand any thing of his moral, his divine nature. If it does, farewell to all religion! Let us erect the Athenian altar, and bow down before it, — not in awe, but in despair. But it is not so with us. I cannot grasp the Infinitude of God's wisdom and goodness; but I can know and feel something of their nature. Humbler instances might show us this. I know something of what thought was in the mind of Sir Isaac Newton, but I cannot comprehend all his mind or knowledge. Standing upon a mountain, I look upon a forest with a million of trees in it. I cannot count them, and could not comprehend them all if I could count them. But I can understand something of the nature of trees. Looking upon the ocean, it were vain for me to tell or comprehend how many drops there are in it; but I can comprehend something of the nature of each drop, — can analyze and understand it; or, in other words, I can comprehend something of the nature of water, though I cannot comprehend an ocean of it. I cannot comprehend infinite space, but I know what

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space is. I cannot comprehend the infinite multiplication of numbers, but I know what numbers are; nay, more, I know that they do not change their nature by multiplication.

Why should knowledge or love be supposed, by increase, to change its nature? We do not see it to be so, as we trace their progress, from childhood to maturity. The method of knowing may change, but not the essence; the proof, but not the result. We do not ascribe the processes of our mind to the Infinite Mind; we do not ascribe reasoning to it. We think of its knowledge as an infinite intuition; but we understand what intuition is. Omniscience is "all-knowing." If "knowing" loses its meaning because "all" is prefixed to it, then the word Omniscience is without meaning. And so, for the same reason, is every other word by which we speak of God; and we are left to worship an unknown God; that is, to worship nothing.

Let us, then, proceed to inquire into the nature of the originating cause. It is to be known, if at all, by its effects. What are the effects? What is this system of things around us? It is full of relations and adjustments of one thing to another. The soil nourishes vegetables; vegetables feed animals; animals serve man, — work for him, feed and clothe him. In each of these, science finds exquisite and wonderful arrangements. Means subserve ends. Ends in turn become means. Nothing stands apart; nothing stops; but things go on, so to say, in logical sequence. Animals produce their like. The bird chips the shell; and how is this done? Let us dwell upon this instance a moment, as standing for thousands of similar indications. The shell, this little prison, is found to be cut all round the diameter of its inner surface, so that, in hatching, it falls apart. And how does the little prisoner, the

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embryo bird, contrive to do that? It is so folded in the shell, that its bill lies against the part to be cut. But this is not all. Upon its bill grows a little, hard excrescence, like a knife or a saw. With this tool, it cuts its way out; and, soon after it is freed, the excrescence — the knife, no longer wanted — falls off. Now I do not care what this provision is called. Some philosophers object to the word design. They talk of development, evolution, tendency. They tell us, and truly, of a correlation of forces. All may be resolved, it is thought, into one simple principle, — motion; nay, all may be resolved back into a simple germ. Be it so. But germ and product, or force, or motion, whatever it be, it all proceeds in a certain order, in a certain relation of one thing to another.

Now, here is intelligence. It is IN these things, whatever be the cause. It is *here:* it is in the structure of every plant and animal; in man above all. Intelligence is here, however it came to be here. By what indication could intelligence be proved to be anywhere, if it is not manifest in such a system as this? If a book were opened before me, containing only a jumble of words, having no relation to one another, I should say, Here is nothing, or nothing but idiotcy. But if the book had an orderly construction of words, conveying a meaning, I should say, here is intelligence; within the covers of this book is intelligence.

In the same way, that is, by observation, goodness is proved to be in this system of things. All conscious existence is naturally happy. No one can look with healthy eye upon the world in general, whether of brute or human life, without seeing this. Animalism is naturally happy. Intellect is naturally happy. The human affections are naturally happy. There is one attribute of animal life, which, as illustrative both of

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intelligence and goodness, is especially significant; and that is instinct. Without any reasoning, without any deliberation, without knowing why, the whole animal creation is guided to its food, to its way of life, and thousand-fold enjoyment. It is the vehicle of an intelligence not its own. Suspend this all-directing, this omniscient guidance, take away the electric spark from this vast tissue of animal nerves and fibres, and the whole system would fall into collapse and utter ruin. The light shines *through* it, and the medium knows no more of it than the glass knows of the sunbeam that passes through it.

And now, is it reasonable — nay, is it possible — for a rational being to do any thing else but ascribe all this manifest intelligence and goodness to the great Originating Cause? Can he set up mere impersonal, blind tendency, instead of Infinite Knowledge and Goodness? When you read the pages of a book, and find them full of thought, you cannot doubt that somebody wrote it, — some mind produced it. You would be thought a fool, if you said that all these words and sentences dropped from the dictionary, and fell into their places by "natural selection." And will any one say that all the words and sentences of this infinite volume of the Creation dropped into their places without any perception or idea of their relations to one another, on the part of the Originating Cause?

But it may be said, "Why did not the Infinite Intelligence and Goodness make every creature perfect and perfectly happy?" What is this *impossibility*, which the objector demands? That the creature should be made as God, — free from all ignorance, error, imperfection, and trial? If these things exist of necessity, in a created system, then the only question is, Are they turned to good account? Do trials and sufferings in

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the human lot tend to make men better, or worse? Does humanity, does the world, rise, or sink, under the discipline? Certainly it rises; it improves. Certainly to suffer, to struggle, to resist evil, to conquer temptation, is an upward path for individual man, and a path in which millions have walked. So, we are bound to judge, must a finite and free moral nature work out its own wisdom and welfare. We see that its trials, faithfully met, minister to this end; and no reasonable being can doubt that this was meant to be their ministry. And if they were meant for this, then is the system benevolent in what is darkest. As well object to any, to all education, because it costs efforts and pains. A wealthy man founds a seat of learning. There will be difficulties and trials for the pupils' minds, — difficulties and trials incident to the process, inevitable in the ascent from ignorance to knowledge. Does any one deny, for this reason, the value of such an institution, or the benevolence of its founder?

Look at that training of studious youth. See what unfolding of the noblest faculties there will be; what fountains of wisdom and knowledge unsealed; what hierarchies of science built up; what authors, orators, statesmen, will come forth from these haunts of study, to enlighten, delight, improve, and guide the world! Is this the work of man alone, as it seems, perhaps, to him who looks upon it? Nay, it is, in the implanting of all the germs of this culture, God's work. This could not be done for brutes. The Cause, that is behind and above all causes, has given all the powers and faculties and means that have made a noble seat of learning to stand upon the spot which otherwise might have been a barren heath, or a waste common, wandered over by wild savages. And such a school, with such toil and pains and patience, is this universe made to be.

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And suppose it were not so. Imagine the very reverse to exist of that which we see. Suppose that the whole creation, of which we are a part, were one mass of deformity and misery; that all plants and trees grew gnarled and misshapen; that all flowers were black, and exhaled offensive odors; that all animals were hideous to the sight; and that the human constitution bred only disease and pain, and the human soul was intelligent and sensitive only to see and feel the all-surrounding horror; and that, instead of being beneficently adapted to one another, all things were in a state of contradiction, thwarting, and confusion: what should we think? I doubt if there would be any atheists then. It would be felt that there was ill-will, an infinite ill-will, that worked such ill upon us. No philosopher, I judge, would then be found *coldly* speculating about the origin of things, and complacently imagining, that blind, impersonal laws, heaving, senseless evolutions, causeless tendencies of *things*, were the authors and agents of such horrible disaster and misery. Why, then, should not the goodliness and beauty of all things around us, and the natural joy of our own existence, be attributed to a cause altogether different in its character, and equally real in its intent.

But, in truth, such is the overflowing *beneficence* of things; so are our minds wrapped up in its investment; so is it the thought and spirit of every scene around us, that the very familiarity, and the inborn assurance of it, make it less distinct, less impressive, less intentional to us. We glide down the smooth stream: all is right; all is as it should be. We are so content and happy, that we think of nothing but the stream and its verdant banks; and it is only when we are flung upon the hard rock of affliction and misery, that we lift our hands to heaven, and say, "Why has the Almighty Will dealt with us so?"

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But this is not the ordinary habit of our minds. The testimony of human experience and feeling is the other way. Naturally we feel that we do not owe our existence and condition to a malignant cause. Naturally we feel that we were made, not to be miserable, but to be happy. Naturally we feel bound not to be bad, but good. Whatever evils there be, or seem to be, in the system, yet the preponderance of good, or of good tendency, is such that our minds naturally lean that way. The main tide of human thought runs in that direction. Let any one malign the good order of things, the good Providence, or the good Being who is over all, and the whole world brands him as a traitor to reason, to common sense. Considering what we *do* suffer, this is a powerful testimony. If the universal feeling and judgment of men have weight, this is entitled to special consideration.

And now, if, in accordance with the general convictions of mankind, we believe that we can know something of the character of God, though we cannot comprehend his infinitude; and if what we do know and see around us is perfect wisdom and goodness; then, to cultivate this knowledge, to study this transcendent perfection, and to grow into its likeness, is surely the most rational as well as the highest aim of our being. Nothing can justly seem more strange, more astonishing, or more lamentable, than the absence of this aspiration from our literature, from our science, and apparently from the lives and thoughts of most men, and even of most cultivated men around us. The Buddhists, the Brahmins, and even the Stoic Sages, put shame upon us in this respect. "They sought the Lord, if haply they might feel after him, and find him."

But I will not take on the tone now of complaint or

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rebuke. Rather would I patiently reason with myself and with others, to remove obstacles and to open the way to the highest. There *are* obstacles besides moral alienation. The theme is full of awe; and few have come to see that it is equally full of light and joy. Nay, by many, God is regarded not as Infinite Love, but rather as Infinite and All-repelling Wrath. Then the laws of nature — its unbroken order, the ever-flowing stream of its beneficence — turn away our thoughts from a real benefactor; and the very arguments for gratitude, sad to say, lull it to sleep. We have much to do in resistance to these tendencies. Devotion, a constant sense of God's presence, a habit of seeing his will and wisdom in every thing around us, — this is the top and crown of human culture, and it will cost us care and patience and prayer to rise to it.

But what grandeur of elevation, what fulness of joy, can compare with that! I cannot doubt that most thoughtful persons are sensible, and are satisfied, that a heart full of love and gratitude to God would be a blessing and a joy beyond all others; a strength in weakness, a calmness in trouble, a trust and a solace in affliction, beyond every other. "But ah," they say, "how to get the love and gratitude!" And they rest in this vague and sad feeling of estrangement or indifference, without ever considering what they are to do to draw nigh to the all-quickening truth.

Let me say, then, that there are various ways of looking at the manifestations of God in nature and in religion; and that only one of them can help us. There is the worldly and thoughtless way, that sees nothing. There is the hard scientific way, that sees nothing but facts and laws. And there is the reverent and affectionate view, that which is emphatically the

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Christian view. For Jesus first taught men, with trust and tenderness, to say, "Our Father." Why, then, cannot he who would thus know God cultivate this habit of looking at his works and ways! He is surrounded with manifestations of an Infinite Intelligence and Goodness. They are here, I say. They are manifest and undeniable. Even if he were an atheist, he would be bound to survey these manifestations with admiration and delight. But he is not an atheist: he believes in God. What, then, are these works, these elements and agencies, that surround him? They are sent and meant for his good. "The round world and all that is in it;" the abundance and variety of its products for food and building and clothing; mountains and valleys, oceans and streams, light and shadow, day and night, — are all forever appealing to his admiration, to his mind's highest thought and holiest feeling. Why, then, when evening folds him in its shadow, and lays him down to his nightly rest, does he not say, "There is a care for me"? Why does not the morning's beam wake him to thanksgiving? I say that a rational being should charge himself to think of this. How is it, that when food and refreshment come from all around him — how is it, that when his whole being is interfused with a divine beneficence, he seldom thinks of any thing but senseless elements? The fragrance of flowers might be to him as the incense of praise. The sweet and healthful air might breathe with inspiration. In the fruit that hangs upon our summer boughs, he might taste and see how good the Lord is. Oh, purposeless and thoughtless life, that suffers itself to be moulded by material influences, when celestial grace and goodliness breathe all around it, and are seeking to win it to sympathy, to love, and thanksgiving! The complaint of many is, "they

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cannot come *nigh* to this divine beneficence." But it comes nigh to them. It "compasses their path and their lying down, and is acquainted with all their ways."

This religious homage to what is divine in nature is a true, just, and reasonable feeling. It is not fanaticism; it is not presumption; it is the simple, logical result of the premises. Either there is a God, or there is no God. If there be no God, then there is no place for moral admiration, for reverence, gratitude, or love. If there is a God, then there is the same intrinsic reason for studying reverently and earnestly what is written on the earth and sky, as there is for studying a volume that is written by human hands. Do we try to understand only that which is on a level with ourselves? No: we strive to rise to loftier minds, — to minds, that, in their soaring, are almost out of our reach. We are afraid of being pietists; but we are not afraid of being artists, poets, orators. We are not afraid of being enthusiastic critics upon the great works of genius. We labor to appreciate the fineness and beauty and grandeur of their thoughts. We are eager to know all that we can of the men that have interested and charmed us. Is all this swelling enthusiasm to stop and turn away when it approaches the shrine of the Infinite Glory and Beauty?

If we were houseless and helpless, hungry and desolate, and some human benefactor were to come and give us an abode, and replenish it day by day, all our life long, we could never think of him without a vivid sense of obligation. But we *should* be houseless and homeless, destitute and miserable, without a divine provision for us. I expect some of my readers to pause and hesitate upon such a comparison. They will say, "We know men; we understand their feel-

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ings and can sympathize with them; but we do not, in this wise, know God. We dare not to say that we sympathize with God." Let us not be misled by words. If there is an Infinite Being who loves his creatures; if, by unnumbered, million-fold reduplications of evidence, he has shown it; if, especially, he has formed us to love excellence, and, therefore, his own supreme perfection, — then there is accordance, and may be union and communion, between us and him. I stand firmly upon the ground I have already taken. Intelligence and goodness are here; and it is impossible to refer them to any cause but an Infinite Intelligence and Goodness. To say that all this around us, and all these thoughts and feelings in our own breasts, have sprung from the evolutions of blind and senseless forces and agencies, is as intolerable logic as it is bad theology. Still, to some minds wrapped in speculation, which has deadened their natural feeling, the old and wearying trouble and doubt return. I do not disguise the difficulty. The divine does not come to us as the human does. Shrouded in the infinitude of its attributes, silent, unseen, unknown in much that belongs to it, unimagined, unimaged to us by any visible form, it seems, to our weakness and blindness, hidden, far off, and unapproachable. So Job complained of old: "Oh that I knew where I might find him! Behold I go forward, but he is not there; and backward, but I cannot perceive him: on the left hand where he doth work, but I cannot behold him; he hideth himself on the right hand, that I cannot see him."

But there *are* those who do not thus complain, to whom God is a reality, such as nothing else is, who live habitually in his presence; but I think they are few. What is it that makes this difference? Is it a more affectionate nature in some than others? Is it

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imagination, — the faculty that realizes the objects of thought? Is it a mind that is naturally touched with the sense of what is sublime and lovely? Perhaps it is all of these; but it would naturally be, more than any thing, in a true religious consciousness, a juster view of the object of the soul's adoration and love. In this respect, the ages advance, and we stand on vantage-ground. And yet here arises a question of profound concern to our modern experience. The degree of interest which one will take in any being will depend on the congenialness and the relations between them. The old idolater worshipped with terrible sincerity, for he saw a hand that might strike him down. The Hebrew regarded Jehovah as his nation's God; and in Christianity there have been views of God, as rescuing certain elect persons, having from eternity concentrated his purpose and love upon them, which have awakened raptures of selfish gratitude. I do not mean to say that the sectarian convert has been altogether selfish, nor that the Hebrew thought was altogether local. David's song of praise, we cannot but see, often bursts over all such barriers. But certainly we have come to entertain larger and juster thoughts of a Benevolence which has no favorites; which is good to all; which neither, as a man, loves us, nor, as an idol, threatens us, but which embraces all creatures with a universal, impartial, and invisible beneficence; and this is the cause, in part, of that decay of passionate emotions and pietistic fervors, which characterizes the present age. And now we have to resist the tendencies and dangers of our time. We have to break through the environment with which infinitude and immutability and silence and universal law surround the Incomprehensible God. We have to learn to delight in his goodness *because* it is diffusive

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and universal; and thus may we come to find a new place, a rest, and a home, and an all-sufficiency in the bosom of Infinite Beneficence.

I believe that place will be found. I believe that a new, a higher piety will come. It must come if the world is to rise and not to sink; for piety, that is, love of the All-Divine and Beautiful, is the highest thing. Those who do not believe in human progress may think otherwise; but, for me, it is certain that this social and moral system of our religion, and very civilization, is not to run down into an unbelieving, brutish, and godless world. A piety will come which will not be local, occasional, exceptional, but will be the pervading spirit of life, — when men shall not say to one another, "Know the Lord," for all shall know him, from the greatest to the least. Once let men come to look upon the creation around them as it is; once let them see, not *things* alone, but the divine light and life that stream through them; and then shall every day open revelations; then shall the bird upon the wing and the flower in the field speak to them of God; then shall the ocean roll anthems, and the streams murmur hymns; and the heavens shall be telling the glory of God, and the whole earth shall be filled with his praise.

And man, who is made in the image of God, — man himself, who beholds all these revelations, — shall we, in this survey, pass by him? Humanity is a clearer revelation of God than the material universe; for what can the naturalist find in earth or ocean, — what can the astronomer see in the starry heavens, — that tells him of the unseen God like his own invisible thought?

The thinker is nearer to the source of thought than aught beside. Man stands nearest to God. Child of some heavenly parentage he must be, — child of wisdom

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and love, — else why does he lift his eyes to heaven, taught to love and adore? The poorest creature in the world may look upward, and say, "My God." He who may say that needs no other argument for praise. That man would be envied who could call but his earthly sovereign his protector and his friend.

And it is not individual man alone, but congregated man, that moves our wonder and thanksgiving. From what infinite urn is poured forth this flood of human affections, human love, enthusiasm, and adoration? What *is* it that has built up in this world great systems of social and over-ruling order, — great hierarchies of literature and science and art and religion, — and is now, more than ever, stirring the human heart to self-development and progress? It will not stop nor pause till it has brought forth a consummation grander than has ever yet been seen or imagined. Jesus, — the greatest prophet and power that has appeared in the world to lead on this consummation, — he said, "The kingdom of heaven is like a grain of mustard-seed, which is indeed the least of all seeds; but, when it is grown, it is the greatest among herbs, and becometh a tree, so that the birds of the air come and lodge in its branches."

And, if we speak of the infinitude of God as removing him from us, let us not forget that there is a kind of infinitude in man, a range of boundless desire and aspiration, — the impress upon his nature of the Infinitude from which it came. We lift our thoughts, we stretch out our hands, to the Infinite; and nothing else can satisfy us. That great word — God, — the one word that stands alone in its magnificence and beauty, — I cannot understand, though superstition may shrink from it, and materialism may seem willing to blot it out, how any *rational mind* can *live* far from it. How

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does it penetrate all the depths of our being,—striking every chord of love and wonder and delight! How does it irradiate the earth and the heavens with its splendor and loveliness! How does it bring calmness and breathe peace into all souls when it comes! "O God! thou art my God," says the Psalmist: "early will I seek thee. My soul thirsteth for thee; my flesh longeth for thee. Because thy loving-kindness is better than life, my lips shall praise thee. Thus will I bless thee while I live: I will lift up my hands in thy name."

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